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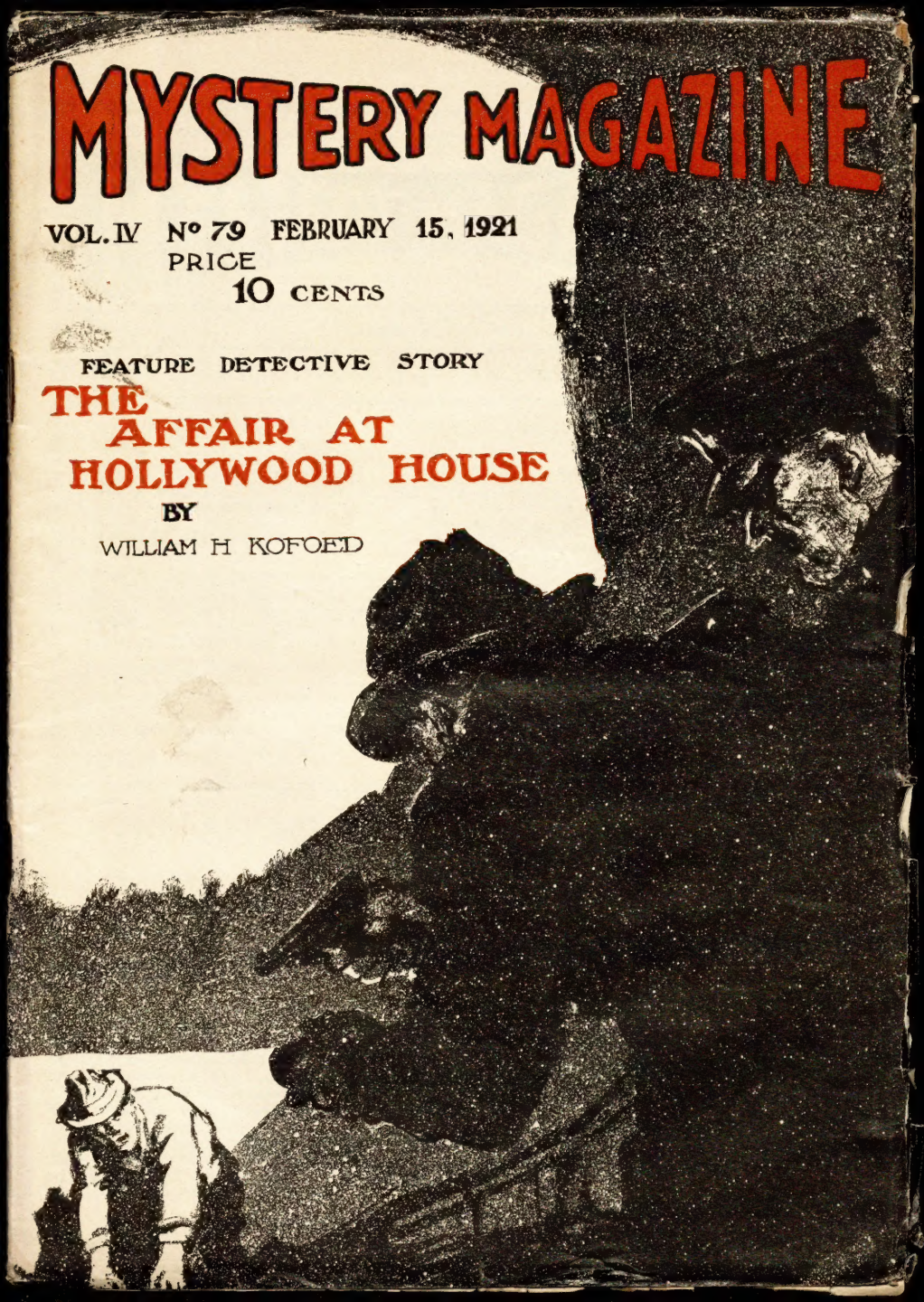
FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

THE AFFAIR AT HOLLYWOOD HOUSE

BY

WILLIAM H KOFOED



"A Keyless Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie, IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

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THE AFFAIR AT HOLLYWOOD HOUSE

By WILLIAM KOFOED

CHAPTER ONE

ANCIENT, rambling Hollywood House, shrinking back from the road, half hiding in the shadows of its own trees and shrubbery, resembled nothing quite so much as a colossal black cat, humped in fear and with a chimney for a tail. Gregg Thorne and his three policemen, taking the moonlit path to the veranda on the run, could not fail, in view of the strange telephone message summoning them here, to make the feline comparison and to feel a consequent tingling of the spine arising from its sinister suggestiveness.

A flatulent moon, coldly luminous, washed the suburban landscape in its rays. By this light alone the quartette made its way, for the house was dark—utterly dark, with not so much as a dim hall light for guidance.

Up the wide veranda steps their grotesque figures dashed—galloping ghosts of the night. Thorne's electric torch liberated a circle of imprisoned sunlight on the door: a thing of carved oak as huge and archaic as the house itself. His hand, projecting across the areola, found an iron knocker and raised and lowered it in a rapid succession of beats that went resounding through high-ceilinged corridors, summoning the occupants with the imperiousness of a court crier.

He desisted, waiting for the oaken barrier to swing inward, which it did not do.

Thorne waited perhaps a minute, then, with the morose recklessness of a man who, earlier in the day, had suffered rejection by the girl he worshiped, nonchalantly kicked in a window and walked through, followed by his cohorts.

His torch swept the spacious, old-fashioned

parlor. Plush furniture, gilded mirrors and pedestals supporting quaint plaster figures leaped out of the darkness as if to greet them.

Yet no one came.

Thorne's torch wavered indecisively. He turned. "You're sure, O'Donnell, this is the place?"

O'Donnell, awed by the sombre atmosphere, merely nodded.

"Sure?" Thorne persisted.

"There can't be no mistake. This is it," whispered O'Donnell. "Me—— I was standin' next the sergeant whin thot female voice came screechin' over the wire. Y' must a' heard it y'rself, Inspector. 'Come quick,' she sez, 'to 37 Ottens Road. I need y'r help. D'y hear?' and she hammered on the receiver hook s'if on the pint uv histericks. 'D'y' hear?' she sez. 'This is Hollywood House—and I've—I've got to have—ugh!——' And—and thot was all, Inspector. And here we are."

"Yes, here we are," echoed Thorne. "Well, let's have a look."

The officers, gripping their clubs, followed Gregg Thorne in single file. Out into the wide, old hallway they glided, dilated pupils searching each darkly awesome corner, on through all the high-ceilinged rooms of the ground floor, down into the subterranean blackness of the cellar. Here, in the furnace, they found a fire gently burning—a fire just sufficient to dispel an always lurking dampness that hung like mournful, waiting spectres forever in the background.

"A fire," soliloquized Thorne, "even in the world's youth, signified human presence somewhere near."

His companions maintained their uneasy silence.

Up the stairs again, and yet again, to the second floor and its sedately furnished bedchambers. Everything was in perfect order, the linens unruffled—proof of proud housekeeping, these. Yet there were no signs of life. The beds obviously had been unused for some time. No feminine gewgaws littered the dressing tables.

Down the corridors, out one room, in another, then another ascension, this time to the attic; but no living thing, nor dead, presented itself.

Back again to the second floor—to a cozy little room lined with book shelves and supplied with comfortable chairs—a sort of auxiliary to the library on the ground floor. Thorne carefully drew the shades, closed the door, and snapped on the electrics.

Sinking into a chair, he brought out a cigar and lighted it. "O'Donnell," he said, blowing smoke rings in the air and following their whirring movements through half-closed lids, "what do you make of it?"

"T' be truthful, Inspector," replied the heavy-set Irishman, and Thorne observed with a sense of caustic humor that his usually florid face had lost its color, "t' be truthful, it's beyond me—unliss a banshee infests this divilish place."

"The presence—I might say the existence—of banshees, O'Donnell," remarked the chief, "are dependent upon your digestion."

"P'raps," mumbled O'Donnell, coloring.

"However," proceeded Thorne absently, "you needn't stay. Take your men and return to headquarters."

"But, if there's anything doin', I want t' stay," grumbled O'Donnell, somewhat affronted at what he took to be an implied criticism of his courage.

"Don't mistake me," soothed Thorne. "I am not telling you to leave because I doubt for a moment your willingness or your bravery. We came here expecting to find something, didn't we? Yet the place is empty. Some one may have essayed a joke on headquarters; but whatever the explanation, I can find no reason for retaining three able-bodied men, not to mention myself, on the ground. As you can see, this is a very comfortable place to spend the night. And I shall not be lonesome. My thoughts will be company enough, I assure you."

"Thin we're t' report back at headquarters?" summed up O'Donnell.

"You are," said the chief, turning again to his cigar. He heard the trio's heavy, departing footsteps echoing through the hall, and a moment later the slamming of the front door. Then, encouraged by the silence as well as the cozy warmth of the little book-lined room, he sank into a reverie.

In thought he was carried back to his early evening interview with Anita Stanton—"Anita the beautiful," whose deeply brown, philosophic eyes wove the charm of an old world goddess over him. Gregg had known her only three months, yet, as his associates at headquarters observed, he had "fallen hard." And until to-night he had cherished the delusion that she cared quite as much for him—an accurate indication, he told himself bitterly, of the potency of her charm. What a complacent lover he had been—to so cheerfully, so confidently purchase the solitaire in its platinum setting and bear it to her before even touching upon the relatively important subject of the love they held for one another! She had been quite at ease, at the first, though she surely must have sensed the imminence of his proposal. He had burst in so enthusiastically. Yet she preserved her balance perfectly, adjusting a jeweled comb—a striking thing bearing her initials in rubies—with steady hands before offering them both to him in greeting. He was an ass, and he did not blame her for refusing him, though he had to admit she appeared saddened and depressed by the action she had taken.

Her excuses—or reasons, if such they might be termed—were weak, and had the air of being trumped up on the spur of the moment—all except the one touching on his salary, which he knew wasn't as adequate as it might be, for Anita was rather well off.

Sunk far down in the chair and puffing gloomily at his cigar, utterly oblivious of whatever spectres might infest Hollywood House, Gregg Thorne re-

hearsed the details of his unsatisfactory interview with Anita, and had about arrived at the opinion that however well he might play the rôle of a Sherlock Holmes, he was certainly unfitted for that of Romeo, when a sudden sound arrested his attention.

It appeared to be the dull scraping of metal upon metal. Thorne sat quickly upright, his ear inclined toward the half-open door. It came again, this time a prolonged boom followed by a rattle.

Gregg arose and went toward the hall. The sound continued, rolling up from the bowels of the place. He recognized it now. It was that of a furnace being raked.

In a flash the chief's automatic was in his hand and he was gliding toward the stairway. Though he stepped as lightly as possible for a man of his towering bulk, the old steps creaked under him, adding to the tenseness of the situation.

Feeling the way rather than resort to his electric torch, Thorne at length reached the cellars of Hollywood House—reached them with a sigh of relief, for their steps were even more noisy than the ones above, and at any moment he had expected a bullet for his pains. Fortunately his expectations were not realized.

The sounds had ceased with the opening of the cellar door, and everything was as quiet now, and as dark, as the catacombs of Paris. Thorne had little difficulty, either, in picturing human bones scattered about, for his was a keen imagination, and the evening's experiences had certainly not blunted it.

Even the musty air was tomb-like. It weighed upon Thorne, and he felt that he must thrust his way through it, as a diver does on sea bottom.

At length a faint glow from the furnace revealed itself, and the chief paused. He knew that a crucial moment had arrived.

Should he flash his torch or bide his time? The former course might mean his end. Well—and what if it did? He smiled wryly to himself. A moment later a glowing beam of light shot from his hand and swept the vicinity.

No burly form leaped out at him, no flame cut the shadows, no sound, even, disturbed the still, dank air. Thorne was surprised, and perhaps a little disappointed. He had expected, by his little pilgrimage to the basement, to clear up the vague mysteries enshrouding Hollywood House. The absence of activity, now that he had revealed himself, provoked him.

He went prowling into corners, chasing and dispelling shadows, and pretty generally covering the entire area of the place, all to no avail. Not even a mouse appeared. Yet some one had raked the furnace, some one had tossed coal upon the fire to keep it alive. Who was that person and why his secrecy? Thorne was sure he had not left the cellar.

"O'Donnell," said Thorne to himself, "would have thought his banshee theory substantiated."

He reluctantly retraced his steps, and again found himself in the little book-lined room with its cozy chair and bright lights. He took up his half-burned cigar, which had gone out, and thoughtfully applied a match to it. "I cannot avoid the feeling," he mused, "that this house is a stage, set for a stirring scene whose actors have not yet crystallized in the dramatist's brain. At present they are mere shades, wandering unhappily about, contemplating their destinies."

The idea appealed to him, and he reclined in his chair, imagining, not without a certain youthful delight in his ability to do so, that the room was peopled wth countless bizarre characters, each of whom was quite transparent.

As he sat thus, he heard a light footstep, seemingly in the corridor, within five or six feet of the door. At first he explained it by remarking, mentally, that he had given his imagination too free rein, but when the step was repeated and a loose board squeaked his muscles tensed and again his revolver saw the light.

He remained in the chair, listening uneasily, his weapon trained on the wall near the spot he judged the intruder to have paused. Another, almost imperceptible creak, and the gun roared, spitting its missle hallward.

As though echoing the explosion, a woman's scream, high-pitched and fraught with horror, coursed through the untenanted house.

Thorne's face whitened. He felt his skin grow clammy. "My God, what have I done?" he muttered, flinging himself toward the door.

The corridor was as black as night itself, except where a patch of light shone from the room he had quit. Thorne expected to trip over a body, but did not. He resorted to his torch.

The hall was empty—unquestionably empty!

Bewildered, he returned to the reading-room. This thing was getting quite beyond him. He dallied in the middle of the floor, torch in one hand, revolver in the other, gazing about. At length his eyes fell upon a closet door on the hall side. Cursing his stupidity, Thorne reached it in one bound and flung it wide.

He was confronted with an amazing array of old dresses and cloaks, which hung like a curtain before him. He smiled grimly at this obvious attempt at concealment, and shouldered through them to find, with amazed satisfaction, that he stood on the topmost landing of a hidden stairway. As he flashed his light about, a faint echo of footsteps came to him from below.

Thus spurred to action, Gregg dashed headlong down the stairs. At the bottom, which he judged to be on a level with the cellar floor, he came up against a blank wall. He flung himself upon it, but, in spite of his great strength, found it immovable.

Well, whoever had gone down those stairs ahead of him had made their escape by now. Regrets

were vain. Swinging around, the inspector made his way slowly upward.

At a height approximately between the first and second floors, Thorne's electric lamp discovered a door in the wall—a thing he had overlooked on his hurried downward journey. Without hesitancy, he grasped its knob and flung it wide, muttering the while that he had surely come to an ancient house with all its ancient tomfoolery. A second later he found himself in a tiny chamber, not much larger than a deep closet and lacking windows. It was furnished with a chair, a table, and an old haircloth sofa. On the table stood a telephone instrument—in strange contrast with its medieval surroundings.

Gregg took these things in with careful deliberation before directing his attention elsewhere. From the moment of his discovery he had believed this room, like the others, uninhabited; but now he experienced a rude awakening. His light, falling carelessly upon the floor, revealed a woman's neatly shod foot and ankle!

Thorne fairly gasped. His wandering fingers found a push-button and a single electric bulb dangling from the centre of the ceiling flared up. His first, horrified thought was that he had shot this woman, and that she had crawled down here to die, but as his faculties struggled to regain their equilibrium he realized the absurdity of such an idea, for he had fired toward the hall, not at the closet door behind which she hid. Or was it she who hid behind the door? If so, whose footsteps had come to him from the depths of the secret staircase?

Utterly mystified, Thorne knelt beside the body and conducted a brief examination. Much to his surprise he found she had died, not by a bullet, but by strangulation. The throat was bruised and blackened.

Sighing, he arose and stood for some moments studying the woman's features. They were severe and proudly aristocratic—rather lean, on the whole, with thin, straight lips and an aquiline nose. The hair, done up in a prim pompadour, had been but slightly disarranged, indicating the suddenness of attack and the futility of resistance.

Again Gregg gave his attention to the room. He was in his element now and exercising those faculties which had won him considerable local renown as a detective.

The murderer, he remarked to himself, must have been a cold-blooded individual, for he had very deliberately replaced the telephone receiver on its hook and had straightened whatever furniture might have been upset in the one-sided struggle.

Thorne began now to search the floor, and had not gone very far when—on this night of shocks and surprises—he suddenly received his supreme shock.

For under the table, within a few feet of the body, he found Anita Stanton's unique, ruby-studded comb—Anita, whose hand he had asked in marriage not six hours before!

CHAPTER TWO

DAY was dawning when Inspector Thorne and a neighborhood physician left Hollywood House—left it with the body of the murdered woman laying on a prim bed in one of the spacious, old-fashioned front bedrooms—left it with a cordon of police on guard.

"You are quite sure of your identification?" pressed Thorne.

"Positive," replied the doctor. "She is the older of the Whiting sisters, whose forbears lived in Hollywood House since the days of Robert Fulton. I have treated both Katherine and Clara a number of times. Nothing serious. They were rather high-strung and susceptible to what I might term imaginary ills."

"It is Katherine upstairs?" queried Gregg, as he cast a look over his shoulder at the big, rambling house hiding behind its own shade trees.

The doctor nodded. "I must confess, too," he added, "my astonishment upon receiving your call, for more than a month ago the Whiting sisters sent away their servants, closed up house, and departed mysteriously, no one knows where. That you found Miss Katherine as you did, Inspector, is as surprising as it is shocking."

"The body could not have been lying there several days or weeks?"

"No. She has been dead but a short time. Not more than five hours, I should say."

"The sisters were supposedly out of town?"

"That was our supposition."

"Ours?"

"The neighbors," qualified Doctor Scollard, flushing slightly under his beard. "They talk, you know—and often make a confidant of their physician."

"Was there a general impression afloat, then, as to the reason for the Misses Whitings' disappearance?"

"No. That, as I said, was shrouded in mystery. Yet no one could think ill of them. They were a sternly righteous pair, proud of their lineage, and covetous of the family's good name. The thing that puzzles me principally is the whereabouts of Miss Clara. Heretofore the two were inseparable."

"Was there ever bad feeling between them?"

The doctor raised his hands, palms outward, in gentle protestation. "Impossible," he said.

Back at his desk in headquarters, Thorne promptly lost himself in a maze of theories, hopes and fears, and sat gazing at the green blotting pad under his elbows for upwards of twenty minutes.

He confessed to an entirely different feeling, an entirely different mental reaction toward this case

than toward any other in his whole long and varied experience with crime.

First of all he could not avoid a sense of incompleteness, which led to the belief that the murder of Katherine Whiting was not, of itself, an end, but merely a means to an end. As to what the real end might be, he could not even hazard a guess. It was from this the sense of incompleteness grew.

As a matter of fact, Thorne felt more like a bound and blindfolded man around whom big things were happening—actions affecting himself as well as others, but too undefined to the ear alone to be understood—he felt far more like this than a dispeller of mysteries.

And he was troubled about Anita, for of her presence in Hollywood House on the night of the crime he was convinced. It might have been her footsteps behind the closet door. It might have been her scream from the secret chamber. Although to him it was utterly unthinkable that a girl such as she would commit even a misdemeanor, not to mention this gruesome crime, he could not avoid the assumption that she figured in it somehow. Why was she at Hollywood House? Why was Katherine Whiting murdered in cold blood while she telephoned the police? The master of mysteries was himself mystified. He felt in all these things a lack of motive.

All of which led back to the regrettable incident of Anita turning him down. Had she accepted his proposal he would unquestionably have enjoyed a closer confidence and perhaps been informed of such facts as would lead to an understanding of the case and place him in a better position to aid her, providing, of course, she needed aid.

But she had said no. She had said it with a hint of sadness, it is true, but the negative was none the less a negative on that account. And, so far as Gregg could see, money—or lack of it, rather—had been the cause.

No matter how much Gregg disliked this mercenary aspect of things, he had to admit it a reflection of modern life and accept it as such. He had not only to tolerate it, but to bow to it. And so, thinking rather longingly of Anita, and thrusting for the time being the details of his profession out of mind, he mused on ways and means of swelling his income. He had some money in bank. Not a great deal, but still enough on which to make a start.

The first thing to suggest itself was foreign securities. The low rate of exchange had made them a glowing possibility in the minds of speculators, and Gregg was certainly not blind to the glow. A number of his friends had invested in them and were blatantly enthusiastic concerning their prospects. Yes, foreign securities might——

But he was wasting valuable time. He would take that up later. If he was going to win through on the Whiting case he would have to stir himself. He reached for his telephone, with a view to calling Anita, but paused as his hand touched the instrument, changed his mind, wrote a brief note of instructions to his aides, and immediately left the office.

Thirty minutes later found him at Anita's apartment.

She greeted him in a plaited flesh-tinted morning gown. To Gregg she appeared softly refreshing and gave no indication of having passed through a night of weird thrills. But then Anita was an extraordinary person, and certainly not given to promiscuously revealing her thoughts to anyone.

"I believe," said Thorne, looking into her deep, brown eyes and holding her hand in both of his, "that I came on departmental business, but, seeing you, I realize it was much more important than that. Anita, I've got to have you, and some day I shall. Please try to accustom yourself to the thought. It's inevitable, dear."

A shadow crossed the girl's face. "I do care for you, Gregg," she murmured, "but—well, there is no use discussing that now. My decision of last evening must stand—for the present."

"Then there is hope?" pleaded Gregg.

"Perhaps," she half conceded.

"Splendid! You've made a new man of me." He threw back his broad shoulders and laughed jubilantly. "And you may depend on me, Anita," he added, "to do my darndest toward swelling my private fortune. I'm all set for a plunge in foreign securities——"

"Oh—no, no! I wouldn't, if I were you," she cried, and Thorne saw, with unmasked astonishment, that she had paled and appeared curiously agitated.

"Why?" he wanted to know.

"I—I—well, you see, I think they're—unsafe. You—might lose—everything."

"Of course there's that possibility. It's a chance speculators take."

"Europe is in turmoil—heading no one knows where. Suppose, Gregg, all those countries should repudiate their debts." She had regained her composure now and was arguing calmly.

"I should be no worse off than many of my friends," replied Thorne. "Though of course I might be less able to afford the loss. Naturally, Anita, I don't want to lose."

"Then wait a while and see how things go," she urged eagerly.

"Very well. I'll do that." And, suddenly reminded of his mission, Gregg—his face sobering—drew the ruby-studded comb from his pocket, extending it toward the girl. "I found this, Anita," he said, "in a hidden, closet-like chamber of Hollywood House, which is on Ottens Road, in the Wyndmeer section. It lay on the floor near the murdered body of Katherine Whiting, one of two spinster sisters well known in Wyndmeer. How it came there is beyond me. Fortunately I was alone at the time, and am able, therefore, to return it without the taint of official suspicion having be-

come attached to it." He stopped, as if awaiting an explanation.

Anita accepted the comb, and turned it over in her hands. The initials A. S. flamed up at her. "Yes, it is mine," she said coolly—too coolly, Gregg thought, impressed with the feeling that she maintained her attitude only by a supreme effort of will. "I missed it this morning as I was dressing, and wondered what had become of it. Do you suppose it was stolen, Gregg?"

Not a word about the surprising fact of it being found next the body of a murdered woman! A pang shot through Gregg Thorne's heart. By her studied ignorance of things Anita had enveloped herself in the deepest shadows of suspicion. A person actually unaware of the circumstances under which the comb was found would have been led to comment, first of all, on the murder.

The girl in the plaited pink morning gown must have read his thoughts, for she said quickly: "You found it beside the—beside a—a dead body? Oh, Gregg!"

Thorne was too gloomy, and too uncertain to proceed further at this time. Anita certainly did not seem disposed to aid him, and he hadn't the heart to adopt the usual methods with her. Perhaps it would be better, anyway, to fortify himself with more data before requesting her to designate her position in the case. He might spoil things by a too hasty judgment. So, passing the matter over lightly, he bade her good-by and took his leave.

As he awaited an elevator in the hallway, one ascending let out a tall, strikingly handsome fellow in tweeds and a jaunty cloth hat. Gregg fell back in surprise and jealous anger when he saw the stranger boldly enter Anita's apartment. Her hosts of admirers were always a thorn in his side. He was tempted to follow and, on the strength of his investigation, break up this early morning tête-à-tête.

He dallied uneasily in the hall, allowing several elevators to dart by. The subdued, unintelligible sound of the man's voice came to him. Again he flirted with the idea of an interruption, but, realizing its presumptuousness and fearing Anita's displeasure, thought better of it in time, signaled the elevator boy, and made his way to the street.

An expensive limousine with a chauffeur in livery stood by the curb. More from habit than anything else, Thorne whipped out his note-book and recorded its license number.

At the corner he caught a car marked "Wyndmeer," and thirty minutes later swung off within quarter of a mile of Hollywood House. He hadn't finished with that place. He wanted to look it over more carefully—in daylight.

Hollywood House—like a great many people—created its own shadows. Its trees were so placed that even the bright sun lost its potency, and, while all the surrounding suburbs lay bathed in warm rays, Hollywood House alone hugged shadows, presenting in appearance a rambling blot on the landscape. As before, Gregg, observing the two front gables and the tall chimney toward the rear, was reminded of a colossal black cat, its back humped, its tail up.

In pursuance of his instructions policemen guarded every entrance to the mystery house. The concealed passage was also being watched. Four men on the outside and one in the little reading-room on the second floor were thus engaged.

Thorne collided with O'Donnell at the front door.

"Mornin', Inspector," greeted the ruddy-cheeked, red-headed Irishman, saluting. His face was quite as grave as it had been the night before, and, besides, it had an "I-told-you-so" look in it.

"Has any one called, O'Donnell?" asked Gregg.

"Not a sowl, sor."

"At what hour will the inquest be held?"

"At noon, I'm told. They've been tryin' t' get you on the phone."

"It can be only a matter of form, of course."

"Av course, sor." O'Donnell said this as though he knew right well you couldn't indict a ghost.

Thorne proceeded directly to the second floor reading room. Nodding briefly to the guard, he walked through the mass of clothes hanging in the closet and down the secret stairway to the tiny compartment between the first and second floors. Here he went over every inch of ground with a lens, but to no avail. Clues in this case, he was forced to conclude, were as scarce as motives.

Considerably disappointed, Gregg quit the compartment and gave his attention to the stairway. He felt sure there must be some outlet at the bottom, even though his careful search of the night before had revealed none.

The narrow flight ended perhaps three feet from the cellar wall. This wall was of heavy stone and as impregnable as Gibraltar. The mere thought of a movable section was ridiculous. Nor did the patch of space between the bottom step and the wall lend itself to trap-doors and the like, it being solid earth.

Gregg sat on one of the steps and laughed—a rather tired and somewhat hollow laugh. This medieval stuff, he told himself, was as amusing as it was disconcerting. What silly asses those ancient owners of Hollywood House must have been to build their childish secret stairways and concealed compartments! Despite his protracted experience in crime, this was Gregg's first encounter with such folderol. It was rot, of course. Yet it had loaned itself readily enough to sinister ends, and could not, therefore, be eliminated from his calculations. He must find the outlet.

As he sat idly flashing his torch about, he observed faint footprints on the dirt floor. In a trice he was on his hands and knees, lens gripped tightly, head bent low. But the ground was too

hard to admit of distinct impressions. More often than not merely the back end of the heel was discernible, and as these semi-circular marks were exceedingly small, he felt safe in assuming that women principally had trod the ground. But of what aid was such an assumption? The marks might be those of the murdered woman, of her sister, of Anita, of any one. Identification by their aid was a veritable impossibility, fiction detectives to the contrary notwithstanding. Gregg emitted a grunt of disgust and turned his back on the scene.

As Inspector Thorne had remarked to O'Donnell, the inquest proved but a matter of form, the old, old verdict being rendered: that Katherine Whiting came to her death by strangulation at the hand or hands of persons unknown.

However, an interesting diversion occurred shortly after one o'clock, when a prominent undertaker's motor-bus drew up in the road, and the clerical-appearing fellow in charge explained to Thorne that a blank envelope containing ten one-hundred-dollar bills and unsigned instructions to call at Hollywood House to prepare the body of Miss Katherine Whiting for burial—burial from the old home she had occupied since childhood—had been deposited early that morning in the firm's mail box. Noting their location in sedate, gilt letters on the side of the bus, Gregg's heart sank—for it was within two squares of Anita's apartment.

She certainly did persist in getting herself tangled up in the affair, it seemed.

While the chief undertaker was still upstairs, his assistant came down with some papers in hand. Walking through the high-ceilinged, gloomy corridor, he glimpsed Thorne at the front door chatting with O'Donnell. "I beg your pardon," he said, in the professionally sympathetic tone so generally affected by undertakers. "We found these under the bedclothes, and thinking they might have some bearing on the case——"

"You were quite right in bringing them to me," replied Thorne, taking the papers eagerly. "Thank you!"

Unfolding them, he found that he held a French, an Italian, and a German city bond! Immediately his thoughts reverted to Anita. Why had she so earnestly requested him not to buy foreign bonds? Gad, this affair was getting more involved with each new discovery. It resembled now more than anything else a Chinese puzzle, and one concocted by a none too sane Chinaman at that.

CHAPTER THREE

TWO-THIRTY that afternoon found Gregg Thorne again at his official desk. Before him lay a scrap of note-paper on which he had jotted, in sequence, those various extraordinary incidents from the telephone call for help down through the episode of the furnace being raked in a supposedly empty house, to the discovery of the concealed stairway, the finding of the body as well as the ruby comb, the unsigned order on the undertaker, and, finally, to the unearthing of foreign securities from beneath the sheets of the murdered woman's bed. Out of this jumble of apparently unrelated facts, what could he hope to make?

Who killed Katherine Whiting—and why? That was his problem. There were no obvious motives, no obvious suspects, unless he might place her still missing sister Clara, or Anita, in that category. The only clues were those he had outlined and the faint heel-marks at the bottom of the blind stairway. Now, what was he going to do about it?

He didn't quite know what he was going to do about it. A vision of Anita arose before him, and he was suddenly reminded of her morning visitor. Angrily he pressed a button. A young man in an alpaca coat responded.

"Sturgis," said Gregg, "I want you to look up the holder of license number 315,596."

"Yes, sir," replied Sturgis, turning on his heel. He came back in a few moments, carrying an index card which he placed on Thorne's desk. "The owner," he announced quickly, as though the news was too good to keep, "is Lord Scarborough, who has apartments in the Belvedere."

This announcement came like a blow in the face. Gregg felt that he was completely out of luck, with a titled personage pursuing Anita. He fell into deep reverie, which, as was often the case with Gregg, concluded in a blaze of inspiration.

He called up one of the largest brokerage houses in the city, requesting them to send a man over immediately. While waiting, he received a report from one of his aides who had been endeavoring to check up on the movements of the Whiting sisters. Only one fact worth noting had been ascertained, and that was that on the morning of their disappearance the sisters had drawn from the Third National Bank the sum of three thousand dollars in cash. Inquiries throughout Wyndmeer had revealed absolutely nothing; the Whitings had not been seen since they closed up house. Their nearest neighbor, a peculiar old lady with square-rimmed spectacles, had once observed smoke issuing from the tail-like chimney and thought it queer, but had not remarked about it to any one until now. Thorne's aide also brought back with him a detailed description of the missing sister, Clara. She was a small, thin person, he averred, quite as aristocratic in bearing as Katherine, but more timid, more easily disturbed. Her nose had the distinctly aquiline trend of the Whitings.

Gregg Thorne was in consultation until six o'clock. Then, going out into the waning day, he had dinner at a downtown restaurant, and towards seven set out again toward Wyndmeer. Though his demeanor was calm enough, he confessed to a

strange mental excitation, as though the aerial of his mind had caught a spirit message portending trouble.

The colossal black cat that was Hollywood House was, if anything, more sinister than ever in the pale, unearthly glow of the suburban twilight. The police on day duty had been relieved, so Gregg went to each of the new men, instructing them and urging strict watchfulness. When he was sure they were properly keyed up, he proceeded through the vault-like hallways to the second floor, and thence to the bottom of the concealed staircase, his electric torch clearing the way before him.

Acting with the assurance of a sleep-walker, he bent over, gripped the ledge of the lowest stair, and tugged at it. Easily and without noise a whole section comprising three or four steps lifted like a trap-door on hinges, revealing another flight disappearing in the darkness below. Lowering the door of steps after him, Gregg went down into the pit.

If he had been struck before by the quaintness of old Hollywood House, he was now moved to admiration, for he found himself in a spacious sub-cellar furnished as sleeping quarters, kitchen, and workshop, electrically lighted and heated with hot-water radiators which effectively subdued the dampness. One glance told him what he wanted to know, but his curiosity sent him prowling around, and in a far corner he was rewarded with the sight of an iron ladder which investigation showed opened into the coal bin above. Access to the bin was through a hole covered by an iron lid and hidden under a light layer of coal.

"Well, that explains a number of things, particularly the vanishing of the furnace tender," he muttered, climbing down again, with considerable satisfaction, into the sub-cellar.

In another corner he glimpsed a door, and going to it threw it wide, but fell back at the gust of damp air that swirled in upon him. A moment later he was at the threshold and flashing his torch down a long, earthen corridor which seemed to have no end.

Gregg suddenly felt himself overwhelmed with mirth. "This isn't real life," he chuckled. "It's the wildest kind of fiction. Surely I'm living between the pages of a book in the days of the robber barons, and this is a castle on the Rhine. Odds fish, or bodkins, or whatever the word might be, but this is a funny situation for a twentieth century detective!"

Then, moved to action, he switched off all lights in the sub-cellar, closed the door after him, and set out through the narrow, dank tunnel to ascertain its destination.

It seemed to Gregg that he had traversed several miles, though in reality it could not have been more than a few hundred yards, when he reached the end and climbed a short ladder to find himself in a rustic pergola well screened from view by clumps of bushes.

Night had descended over Wyndmeer and stars were winking from the blue-black canopy above. Thorne drew a long breath of the pungent spring air, covered up the traces of his emergence, and vanished behind a bush—to wait.

The minutes lagged, and when an hour had come and gone and nothing had happened, Gregg wondered if his reasoning had been faulty. Yet with the tenacity of a good detective he stuck to his post and watched another hour, and still another, crawl by. It must have been close upon twelve o'clock, and the waiting inspector was very tired indeed, what with the excitement and unremitting activity of the past forty-eight hours, when he was suddenly jarred into alertness by approaching, stealthy footsteps.

Shrinking close to the bushes that shielded him, Gregg thrust a branch downward and peered out upon the moon-lit pergola. What he saw caused him to draw in his breath sharply. Two women! Anita, the girl he cared more for than any one else in the world, and Clara Whiting! A moment later they had disappeared in the passage leading to Hollywood House.

Gregg waited a few moments, cogitating, then started across the lawn toward the house. He had taken hardly a dozen steps when a shoe scraped on the pergola floor and he snapped around barely in time to catch a glimpse of shadowy shoulders disappearing into the earth.

Instead of following, however, he cut through the shrubbery and dashed at top speed for the veranda. He found O'Donnell, who had come out to relieve one of the men, again on duty at the front door.

"Good! I'm glad it's you, O'Donnell," panted Thorne in as much of an undertone as he could command. "Here's a chance to redeem yourself—and incidentally lay that foolish belief in banshees. Out there beyond the shrubbery you'll find a pergola—a little summer house. There's a trap in the floor, covered with an old rug, and a crazy tunnel leading to Hollywood cellars. Go through it and guard the outlet. Here, take my torch! But don't use it unless you have to."

He gave O'Donnell a shove, and the excited Irishman was off like a streak.

Gregg summoned two officers from the rear of the house. "Go to the second floor front—to the room where the body of Miss Whiting is laid out," he ordered, "and detain whoever you find there!"

Without waiting to reply to their awed queries, he rounded up the rest of his men, sent one to the coal bin in the cellar, left one on guard in the hallway, and led the others up a back stairway to the notorious reading-room.

He paused at the door and his heart leaped in his throat. "Some one's been here ahead of us," he said quietly, striving to control his excitement and indicating with pointing finger the unconscious figure of a bluecoat on the floor. "Kerrigan's been knocked out. There's a pretty husky

intruder somewhere in this house. Scatter, men."

At that moment a commotion in the hall below echoed along the high walls and sent each man's hand to his gun butt. For a moment they were poised like a bronze group expressing tense, wide-eyed expectancy; then off they swirled, a black mass of jumbled forms falling pellmell down the wide front staircase to their comrade's rescue. As they went a revolver blazed through the semi-darkness, there was a sound of rushing footsteps along the hall, and the guard's high-pitched cry of "There he goes!"

Gregg, hearing those footsteps on the back stairs, swung around and leaped up the front flight in time to see a figure disappear in the little reading-room.

Fearing that, after all his efforts, the intruder might escape, Thorne cut loose with his automatic and the house was filled with the roar of shot on shot.

Then, as if in a daze, he found himself at the head of the concealed stairway, peering into the darkness. "Stay where you are," warned a hoarse and panting voice below, "or I'll drill you full of holes."

Gregg responded by pressing viciously on his trigger. It clicked harmlessly. The weapon was empty.

Around him he felt the brushing forms of his aides. One of them, whipping out a torch, flashed it fearlessly into the void, revealing a tall, broad-shouldered man in the act of lifting the stairway trap. As the light fell on him he raised his head, and Gregg saw that it was Anita's morning visitor, Lord Scarborough!

Transfixed for a moment with the surprise and fear of a cornered animal, the face glared up at them; then, as the fellow's hand snapped toward his hip, and as three revolvers were leveled upon him and as three trigger fingers tensed, the stairway trap was heaved upward and Scarborough, taken unawares, was flung in a ridiculous heap on the small patch of dirt floor, his head striking the cellar wall. Stunned, he lay still, blinking into the eye of the torch.

And, slowly rising into view, came O'Donnell's flame-topped head, and ascending the narrow passage his voice rich in brogue: "So thot's the banshee, is it? A divilish sick-lookin' one, I'll say!"

CHAPTER FOUR

THEY met in the little reading room, and it was like an assemblage of actors before the final curtain. Two officers came in, one leading the weeping Clara Whiting, the other Anita. Young Lord Scarborough sat in the Morris-chair, his head in his hands.

Anita, glimpsing Gregg, stiffened proudly. "Well, Mr. Inspector," she said coolly, "are we under arrest?"

Thorne did not answer directly. "Listen to me a moment," he requested, and faced the group. "My position in the mêlée has been to find the murderer of Katherine Whiting. At first this appeared extremely difficult, I might even say impossible, for the clues were few and apparently insignificant, and there was not even a suggestion of motive. As you know, I am a man who believes that, given time, all things properly adjust themselves; so I dropped the matter for a while and turned to pleasanter thoughts." Here he glanced at Anita. "It is often in such moments that the subconscious mind goes to work and discerns things quite beyond the realm of the conscious mind. And the sub-conscious mind, it seems, has a fondness for trivial incidents. Mine dallied with two. The first was a faint heel mark at the foot of the concealed staircase.

"I had found this particular imprint within an inch of the bottom step. It had been made by a woman's shoe and the straight, inside line of the heel lay parallel with the step, indicating of course that the imagined outline of the rest of her shoe lay somewhat under the step. How could this be possible unless a section of the stairs was movable? So of course it was clear to me that I had not yet explored all the medieval mysteries of Hollywood House, and that I might find something below those stairs that would shed light on the murder mystery.

"The other incident revolved around a number of French, Italian, and German city bonds found by the undertaker in the front bedroom. . . . Now I myself had been on the point of buying some such bonds, and my subconscious mind, already suspicious, slyly suggested that I procure a couple and compare them. So I called up Mr. Fleetwood, one of Wrecksall & Company's best men, and had him come to my office with a batch of foreign securities. We scrutinized them closely under magnifying glasses and found a number of discrepancies which led us to the conclusion that the Whiting bonds were counterfeit!

"The rest wasn't difficult, for I had only a few characters to work with. My imagination, now extremely active, had formulated some pretty concrete suspicions, which were substantiated merely by looking up Lord Scarborough's occupation. I found that he was operating a certain International Securities Company, with offices in the Skydome Building. There you have it in a nutshell. I had fallen in upon the beginning of a world-wide swindle—one of the cleverest, I must admit, that has ever come to my attention. But what proofs had I? None whatever—at that time. Thus my excited eagerness to reach Hollywood House and probe its final mysteries. You see, the whole thing rested now on the correctness of my interpretation of the heel print. Fortunately the interpretation was correct. I found the sub-cellar with its printing presses and plates and

engravers' tools. The great swindle was nipped in the bud.

"What had this to do with the murder? But for it there would have been no murder.

"When I discovered the underground entrance to Hollywood House, I felt in my bones that we were going to have visitors to-night. I felt that Miss Clara, who was still in hiding, would want to view her sister's body—a perfectly natural impulse. That she did so is to me sufficient proof of her innocence, though there are a number of other considerations tending to the same conclusion, such, for example, as I applied to Anita Stanton in satisfying myself of her blamelessness—that the powerful clutch resulting in the unfortunate woman's death could hardly be that of a girl so young and slim as Miss Stanton.

"Miss Stanton, however, might have been the guilty one more readily than Miss Clara, for a ruby-studded comb, which she confessed as hers, was found beside the body. But the fact that the room in which the tragic struggle occurred had been carefully straightened out—the telephone receiver replaced on its hook, the chair, table, and sofa adjusted to their proper places—riddled suspicion, for a person careful enough to attend to these details would hardly overlook so important a clue as the comb. No. Obviously Anita Stanton went into that room all unaware of the gruesome shock awaiting her. Otherwise she would certainly not have screamed upon discovering the body.

"That leaves the so-called Lord Scarborough. And I think Miss Clara can clear up a number of things concerning him."

Clara Whiting, much distraught, had sunk into a rocker and was trembling visibly, though she made a brave effort to control her nerves and preserve the proud, aristocratic mein of her forebears. At length, getting a sufficient grip on herself, she began in a low, almost inaudible voice: "Yes, of course he did it, and as he often threatened he would if either of us interfered with him. Poor Katherine was—too bold. His dictation became intolerable to her, and—and she decided to put an end to it."

"He is really a titled Englishman?"

"Yes. The cast-off and disreputable son of the Earl of Warwick." Clara Whiting, reassured by the presence of so many bluecoats, proceeded more steadily now. Fear was gradually dying from her eyes and being replaced by a look of utter loathing for the slumped figure in the Morris-chair. "He was really a second cousin, though we never recognized him as such because of his disgraceful conduct. He spent the war period in South America, came to be recognized as a practical swindler there, and escaped to the United States barely in time to avoid arrest. He knew of Hollywood House and its medieval arrangements, and when he conceived this latest criminal escapade—this international bond swindle as you call it—it is plain he could think of no better location for his secret activities. Of course, he told us nothing. He knew we feared him, shrank from him, yet would not betray him because of our relationship. He told us we must leave the old estate in his hands until autumn, that it was all right, and that we should go off somewhere and forget about it. When we demurred he flew into a great rage and threatened our lives. Realizing his total irresponsibility and living practically alone and unprotected as we did, we were terrified beyond reason and hurriedly packed up that night and left, without even hinting to any one at our destination. We went to live with our niece, Anita."

"And the rest is easily supplied," concluded Thorne. "He moved his equipment in and began work—experimental at first. And your sister, thinking perhaps she was aiding a wicked undertaking, rebelled and went to the sub-cellar and found those bonds which she took as evidence. And then she heard Scarborough enter, and flying to her bedroom hid them under the sheets. Immediately after she sought the telephone and called for help—too late. Anita, of course, knowing her impetuousness, came seeking her.

"Lord Robert A. M. Scarborough," he said softly, turning toward the Morris-chair, "you are under arrest, charged with the murder of Katherine Whiting."

Two officers advanced and placed their broad palms on the Englishman's shoulders. He failed to respond. They shook him, and his body rolled over limply, the eyes wide—glazed.

"It's his neck, sor," whispered O'Donnell, on examination. "The fall got him."

Anita and Miss Whiting had decided to remain at Hollywood House with the bodies of their kindred, and Gregg arranged to stay with them, for which they were silently grateful. Kerrigan, who, much to his discomfiture, had been caught napping by the desperate, prowling Scarborough in search of his bonds, but was now none the worse for the experience, led the exodus of policemen, with "Flame Top" O'Donnell bringing up in the rear. When the place had emptied, Thorne locked the heavy oak door with a sigh and trudged back to the reading-room.

Miss Clara, utterly exhausted by this night of turmoil, was dozing in her rocker. Anita sat quietly near by, gazing into space.

"Why——?" began Gregg, but the girl interrupted him.

"I'll tell you why," she replied in a soft voice. "First of all, I knew—last night—that you were up here because you and your officers arrived just after I entered the grounds. My heart stood still then, for I imagined all sorts of things—that Scarborough had been discovered, or Katherine hurt, or—oh, any number of horrible occurrences. I hid behind a tree until the men came out, but this time there was one less; so, when I had entered the sub-cellar by the secret way, and seen

the presses and the bond plates and filled myself with the astonishing facts of Scarborough's undertaking, I sought the hater and faked it as a ruse to lure you there, for I wanted to look around upstairs—to see what more had happened. Somehow I felt safer about Aunt Katherine, because the police apparently had found nothing. I was going through the second floor when you returned and I was forced to scurry to the closet. The stairs were rather loose in spots, and as I descended they creaked. I grew nervous, and then I came to the tiny, concealed room and suddenly remembered I hadn't looked there. I pushed in the door, snapped on the electric light, and—found Aunt Katherine. I fell on my knees beside her; and then you shot, and I lost my head and fled. As to our not going to the authorities for aid, Gregg, I don't know whether you can understand the excessive pride of the Whitings and Stantons. Aunt Clara and I knew that Scarborough was the guilty one—that, growing infuriated when he caught her phoning police headquarters, he had merely carried out his threat, and we shrank from becoming involved in a murder case. But that was not all. We felt that he would do the same to us if he found us, and believed our safety depended on silence. When he walked in the next morning, shortly after you left, I placed myself among the doomed. And I probably should have been had he thought for a moment I was aware of his crime. The newspapers, you see, had not yet received the story, and he must have assumed me ignorant of it, too. How he located my apartment, I do not know. He came, he said, to warn me, and through me Aunt Clara that, whatever happened within the next few days, we were not to mention his name to any one, nor go near Hollywood House. Oh, he was superbly confident of his power over us. Yet I believe he was prepared to flee the country at a moment's notice. Have I answered all the questions you had in mind, Mr. Inspector?"

"What perception!" smiled Thorne warmly. "But wait. There is one other."

Anita raised her eyebrows.

"I should think," continued Gregg, "that you would, under the circumstances, consider yourself eminently suited for the wife of a detective?"

"That," said Anita, "depends on the detective."

"Would I do?" he whispered, placing his arm around her.

"Oh, Gregg, you know I think you're the most wonderful detective in the whole world!" Her words were almost inaudible as she hid her face in his shoulder.

"And you don't really care about my income?"

"Foolish! That was only an excuse—the first I could think of. I had to keep you at arm's length for a while, Gregg—no matter how it hurt."

A little later the moon, peeping over a tree, looked in to find them in each other's arms; and it rose higher and higher and beamed with an extraordinary brilliancy, until the deep shadows which in the past had seemed a part of Hollywood House were entirely dispelled and the old place stood out bright and fresh like a thing reborn.

WOMAN EDUCATES SPIDER

EDUCATING a spider is a task rarely undertaken. Mrs. Elizabeth Marriott Moffatt, of Wheaton, Ill., one of the few students of spiders in the country, however, set herself to it, and this is what she writes of her experience:

"By far the most common spider in this country is the one known as the 'black-and-brown speckled garden spider,' Angelena naevia," said Mrs. Moffatt. "The species, although called the garden spider, is often found in our houses, where it builds a flat sheet web in some corner, always having a funnel at the rear, into which the spider can escape when disturbed. The body is from one-half to three-quarters of an inch in length. At the back end two of the spinnerets project, looking like little pointed tails.

"A fully grown specimen was captured and put in a wide-mouthed half-ounce bottle. This was laid on its side on the library table. Every day she was given a small drop of water and one or several house flies. The flies were fed to her by placing one in a bottle similar to that in which the spider was caged, placing a card over the mouth of the bottle that contained the fly, withdrawing the cork from the spider's bottle, placing the two bottles mouth to mouth, and then removing the card.

"At once the spider would rush into the second bottle, seize the fly and return with it to her own bottle. She soon learned to run to the mouth of her bottle whenever I approached her with water or a fly.

"After a few days the cork was taken out of her bottle so that she could come and go at will. She would wander about the table, crawling over and around books and papers, but always retreating to her bottle when frightened. She had built a small web in it, with a crude retreat at the farther end and had adopted it as her home.

"She learned so readily to come for food and water that I am led to wonder whether Febre's contention that every act that a spider performs is 'impelled by an instinct that has come down to it through untold generations,' is not subject to some modifications."

Trapping the Gamblers

By POLICE CAPTAIN ROWLAND

THERE is a very respectable road hotel, as thousands know, called the Peacock, not many miles from New York, and there used to be a free-and-easy show there every Thursday evening. The guests went there to hear themselves sing, as they fondly imagine they are doing when moaning forth their doleful strains. One vocalist at the Peacock greatly amused Detective O'Hara. He was a grim fellow, of immense calibre, with a face resembling a coarse piece of very brown paper, who always sung deep, with a bass voice, "I'd like to be a butterfly."

The detective attended whenever nothing of more importance demanded his presence elsewhere. A slippery crook—Antony Warren—used to frequent the Peacock on those evenings, confident that he would be called upon to sing comic jazz songs.

This gentleman the people at the central office strongly suspected to be something worse than a common cheat of the first magnitude in the lower line of predatory life. His manner of effecting the trick at cards known as "sauter la coupe" was first-rate. But card cheating—the people with whom he played being usually pikers—would not keep up Antony Warren's establishment in Bryant Park. Three servants and a Packard limousine could not be maintained upon such small gains as that small cheating would net. O'Hara had his own idea on the subject; an order was booked in the Diary of Instructions that O'Hara was to look after Antony Warren and try to get the goods on him.

"Well, I own I did watch, when occasion served, Antony Warren. The detective first observed that he assiduously courted the company of three young men, whose names he afterwards ascertained to be Henry Turle, Ernest Sherry, and Sidney Sherry. O'Hara scrutinized these young men minutely, and soon made up his mind as regarded them. Antony Warren was, in seeking to strike up an intimacy with them, sowing his seed upon very stony ground. At least O'Hara judged so; but it was as well to watch, if only for the sake of the young men themselves. They interested the officer. One, Henry Turle—of course he, like all others, came to hear himself warble—did not in the least resemble his two young friends. A dark-complexioned, small-featured, good-looking chap enough, who sang a very good song—exceedingly good, refreshingly good—when contrasted with that dreadful "I'd Like to Be a Butterfly!" Ernest Sherry's was, however, the song of the evening, whenever these young men chanced to drop in. "His Lost Child" was really first-rate. O'Hara never heard it sung so well upon any stage.

It was some compensation for the stifling smoke of the room. The other young man, Sidney Sherry, appeared to be in some sense a martyr, going there to hear his brother and Henry Turle sing—a kind of family obligation, for Sidney Sherry and a sister of Henry Turle were about to contract matrimony. The young men were, Tom noticed, very abstemious, seldom exceeding a glass of beer each, and the youngest, Sidney, though not a singer, knew how many beans made five, or Tom was greatly mistaken. Then what could Anthony Warren mean by so persistently waiting upon those young men?

Several months passed. The detective had made his observations, collected and collated certain data regarding Anthony Warren. Those observations, that collection of facts—shadowy facts some of them—decided him to call upon Henry Turle. The two Sherrys were with him.

"Mr. Turle!" said O'Hara, plunging at once in the discussion, "I am a detective; my name is Tom O'Hara!"

"Detective be hanged," rejoined Turle. "What do I care about detectives?"

"Personally, nothing. That is beyond question. But you are from Taunton, Mass?"

"Yes; and what of that?"

"When a sister of one of these young gentlemen passed in her bridal tour through Taunton, the bridegroom introduced to his bride one Martin Lobb, a young man of good standing."

"Yes, yes. Well?"

"That young man and you, Mr. Turle, became fast friends?"

"Yes. And again I ask, what then?"

"Antony Warren, a loose sort of person, hanging about the skirts of Taunton society, happening to be at the hotel where the young married couple stopped, contrived in some way to introduce himself to them and to you?"

"Right again. But what of this?"

"You will presently understand. Martin Lobb has since come into a large sum of money—over seventy-five thousand dollars. Soon after he obtained possession of the legacy he came to New York, where he had no acquaintance except yourself—a fact known to Antony Warren. That chevalier d'industrie also knew, through you, that Mr. Lobb had not only large funds at his disposal, but had a strong passion for gaming. And you, knowing that, but not knowing, not suspecting, what an irredeemable rascal he is, introduced or reintroduced him to Mr. Lobb. I have,

however, more than once fancied that this young gentleman," motioning towards the youngest of the trio, "that this young gentleman reckoned up Antony Warren more accurately."

"I never liked the man," said Sidney Sherry; "never felt the slightest confidence in him."

"So I imagined. The upshot is, Mr. Turle, that, thanks to your introduction or reintroduction, Antony Warren has already eased your friend Mr. Lobb of ten out of his seventy-five thousand dollars."

"Good-night! Is it possible?"

"Not only quite possible, but perfectly true. But never mind that. Our concern is with the future. One remarkable feature in the case is that Antony Warren is himself the dupe as well as tool of a knot of fly mugs. Well, to-morrow evening, as I understand, the swindle is to be consummated. There is to be play upon a magnificent scale; the end of which will be that your friend Lobb will be completely cleared out. Now you can help me to prevent this, and at the same time confer an immense benefit upon a credulous, well-deserving widow, whom the prince of swindlers, by whom your friend Lobb is being victimized, has reduced from comparative opulence to penury."

Turle said he would assist O'Hara most gladly if he could see how he could do so effectually.

"I will tell you how. It is necessary that I and a friend of mine should be present at the gaming-table to-morrow evening. One person will be there who is particularly 'wanted' by the police, and who has successfully dodged them for the last six months or more. I do not mean the jazz gentleman, though his name, strongly underlined, is in our detective list. Now, though we in a general way are familiar with the haunts of these fellows, we are not sure of being able to drop upon them quietly, at the right time. They are old birds whom it is very difficult to snare, cleverly as you may spread your nets. We know the house—the 'hell' I should say—where the final ruin of your friend Lobb is to be accomplished.

"But it is almost impossible that we detectives can surprise and seize them in the face of swindling play. We knock at the door; a servant answers through the door—opening permitted by a chain. We cannot give the mot d'ordre, the password—he makes some agreed-upon communication with a bell, to the people at play, then lets you in. By that time, for any good you can do, it would have been as well to remain out. Now, Mr. Lobb must have the password for to-morrow night, and I wish you to bring him here to speak with me. I don't want to be seen spying about Madison avenue. It is somewhere near that classic spot he lodges, I know. Neither Mr. Lobb nor the persons with whom he is at present associated know me personally, but there are plenty of fellows about there who do. It might be soon made known to the swindlers who propose plucking him that O'Hara, the detective, was on the watch and close at their heels."

Mr. Turle and his young friends, who were plainly much worried for their friend, heartily agreed to Tom's proposition. Turle went off at once to seek Lobb. The detective was to await his return.

Mr. Turle was gone about three hours and O'Hara was becoming impatient, when a taxicab drove up to the door and Tom was presently introduced to Martin Lobb. A genteel, placid, wine-and-watery-looking individual was young Mr. Lobb. He had weak, gray eyes. Gray eyes when keen and clear are the infallible index of a keen, clear intellect; when weak and quivery, the equally infallible indication of nervous flexibility.

O'Hara knew at once not only with whom he had to deal, but how to deal with him.

"Mr. Lobb, you have heard from your friend Turle that I am a detective. You have, I happen to know, been cheated out of about ten thousand dollars by a person calling himself Antony Warren, and another equally estimable gentleman who goes by the name of Richards. There are others in the gang, but Richards is the villain-in-chief. Do you, Mr. Lobb, so far agree with me?"

"I cannot say that I do. Certainly, I have had a terrible run of ill luck; but the tide, however strongly it may set against you, as suddenly turns. I feel persuaded that I shall have my revenge to-morrow evening."

"So do I; but not after the fashion you contemplate. If I and a friend of mine are not present at the play to-morrow evening, you, Mr. Lobb, will be a shelled pea; that is to say, your pockets will be to let, and not worth hiring—those of Richards full to bursting with the last installment of your bank roll."

"I know no one of the name of Richards. Really this——"

"You may not know the name. The rascal has a thousand, more or less; but you know the man. I will give you his portrait in words, but that will be sufficient. He is about my own height; hair is sandy-red, his whiskers of pale sand-color. He is slightly pock-marked; but the distinguishing characteristic is that he has a small, hairy mole on his right cheek, which he is every moment rubbing."

"Winthrop, by jingo! The prince of good fellows!"

"Winthrop, eh? This is his present name de jeu, is it? Now, I want your help to bring one of the most infamous scoundrels in the world to justice, but that I fear is out of the question. Justice, I fear, will never be dealt out to him till the day of final judgment for all of us. I will tell you a short story. It will not detain us long:

"Frank Jameson is the real name of the man whom you know as Winthrop. He was a railway clerk in Jersey, and very speedily acquired the

reputation of a very smart young man. This reputation enabled him to surprise the confidence of a number of simple persons who had money to gamble with. Of course, Mr. Jameson promised exorbitant interest for the money placed—certainly of success to those who confided in him to make their bets in horse-racing. He is no common crook. I will give you a proof that he is not. You may remember that Suburban when a horse called Cossack won. He had prophesied that Van Tromp would win, assuring the people whom he persuaded to back Van Tromp that he knew, from private confidential information, that Van Tromp had been made safe to win. When the news arrived by telegraph that Cossack had won (Van Tromp was second or third, if I remember rightly), great was the consternation amongst the small betting fold who had intrusted their cash in his judgment. It had been arranged that the 'settlement' should take place two or three days after the race. Well, the betters met, as agreed, and with very wry faces.

"In came Jameson, bright and smiling: 'Gentlemen, I need not tell you that Van Tromp has not won the Suburban. Of course I need not. Well, gentlemen, I heard that Van Tromp would not win four days before the race came off—private information of course. I kept dark naturally, having other men's moneys to account for. So I quietly hedged every bet, and went the whole hog upon Cossack. The sum total of it all, gentlemen, is that your $200 has become $500, and here is the kale. Now, Mr. Turle, that was all flam. The money intrusted to him was lost; and we detectives are perfectly satisfied in our own minds that a parcel post money package forwarded to a wealthy builder of Jersey City, which by some accident never reached its destination, furnished the race track winnings.

"This throwing a sprat to catch a salmon succeeded; and the end was that Frank Jameson so ingratiated himself with the people of Jersey that he ultimately left that city in possession of about twenty-five thousand dollars, intrusted to him for investment. The thing seems incredible, but for all that is unquestionably true. Of this immense sum, two thousand three hundred dollars were intrusted to him by a widow, a Mrs. Polding. She had a large family and was anxious to purchase a business in New York. Jameson knew of one that would precisely suit her. Of course he did. A business worth double, treble that sum, but which he, having peculiar faculties, could obtain for the cash the widow had at her command. Luckily, we have his handwriting in a hastily written note, which proves he received this money for that distinct purpose.

"In New York he associated himself with sharpers, blacklegs of every hue and pattern; is thought to be rich, but somehow always evades the pursuit of the police. It is only very lately that we have been put upon his trail; and even now we must go very warily to work, it being doubted whether he has or has not brought himself within the clutch of the criminal law. Of his moral delinquency there cannot, however, be the slightest doubt. Now, Mr. Lobb, to make an end of a tedious story, am I to have your assistance in the effort I am anxious to make to get back the money Mrs. Polding has been swindled out of, and a portion, at least, of the ten thousand dollars of which you have been eased by Winthrop?"

Certainly. Mr. Lobb would place himself in O'Hara's hands!

"All right! This, then, is how we will shape it. You will see Antony Warren to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, no doubt of that. I have an appointment with him."

"Of course you have! Very well. Two cousins of yours—John and Thomas Beadon—you knew John and Thomas Beadon?"

"Of course I did. They went off to Australia."

"Just so; and are just returned with no end of gold dust."

"Dear me! I am so glad."

"So am I. Well, now, just listen. You must inform your friend Warren of that very important fact, and hint that it might not be undesirable to have John and Thomas Beadon present to-morrow evening. You may put it how you please. You are safe to win back all, or nearly all of your losses, of course. Antony Warren has assured you of that a hundred times; and possibly, you know, they may recoup themselves for the sums regained by you by a clever dive into the Australian diggings."

"I think I understand, Mr. Lobb, thus far. That either you are a pauper the day after to-morrow, or that you confer on me the means of being quietly present at the projected sheep-shearing to-morrow evening. You must excuse my frankness."

"I will give you the password. It is 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'"

"Good! Another item! Play very high. Stake all you possess. Of course they must produce corresponding sums. Myself and friend, when you are settled with—but don't let that alarm you—shall play tremendously high, too. You must hint that to Warren & Co. They will come prepared. So shall we; and now good-by. Stick to the text I have written out for you, Mr. Lobb, and you may go back home rejoicing; and the sooner you do go back, take my word for it, the better. This world of Gotham is a dangerous place for ingenuous youths like you."

"I should like to make one in the game to-morrow evening!" said Ernest Sherry—"very much like to make one."

"Well, you look like one that I should like with me when there was rough-house work going on. But better not. You, your brother, and Mr. Turle have never been, I am pretty sure, in a gaming house since you were born. The matter will, in

all probability, come before a police court—be published in the newspapers. It will be better, therefore, that your names should not in any way be mixed up with it. Again good-by! Be firm, Mr. Lobb—trust implicitly in me, and all will be well."

O'Hara knocked, as instructed by Mr. Lobb, four times at the door of the house in Grant street. First, rat-tat! the postman's knock; next, a single tap—then a furious tintimarri, concluding with the modest double-knock of a gentleman.

The door was immediately opened as far as the tether of chain permitted. Our cards were presented.

"Very well," said the porter, first glancing at them by a lamp he held in his hand. "Very well, I shall say you have called."

"Uncle Tom's Cabin."

"All right, gentlemen. You are expected, I know. We must be cautious. The detectives try on so many dodges."

"So I have heard. They ought to be strangled, every mother's son of them."

"Right you are, and I should like to pull the cord. Wouldn't I! The first floor, gentlemen, Door on the left."

It was a very pleasant party. One of them Mr. Winthrop, alias Jameson, with respect to whose identity there could be no possible doubt. With what flattering condescendence he welcomed in Messieurs John and Thomas Beadon—two of the most recent gold importations from Australia. Really, if they had been his own brothers, returned home after a long expatriation, he could not have been more cordial, overflowing—or, as the French say, effusive.

It is very fascinating, that high play. Those rolls of bank-notes, heaps of gold; vast sums, the possession of which depends often upon the mere turning of a card, strongly excite one. It did O'Hara at all events, upon that particular occasion.

It was quite two o'clock in the morning when Martin Lobb was finished with. He played with Antony Warren, and though he was permitted to occasionally win—continuous, unbroken success would be a stupid blunder—the end was that Martin Lobb was stripped to his skin. Several times he looked at Tom as if doubtfully expectant that he should in some miraculous way arrest his descent into the black gulf of ruin down which he felt himself to be hopelessly falling. O'Hara gave no sign—not likely; and he fancied he had some doubt as to whether Tom was or was not a confederate with the plunderers.

"That gentleman," said the detective when the silly fool had been completely cleared out, "that gentleman, Mr. Dod——"

"Mr. Lobb!"

"Well, Lobb or Dod, it comes to the same thing. The gentleman has had a run of ill-luck. But ill-luck turns as suddenly as it sets in. I and my friend here should like to take a turn. Only we cannot stop beyond about six o'clock. The *Star of the North* will lift anchor at Pier 10 at ten. So let us have a game or two for something worth winning."

"Bet your life," said Winthrop. "You Australian gentlemen ought to have plenty of gold-dust. But—excuse me, I mean nothing personal to you—they sometimes trade upon that reputation. I never toss with gentlemen whose game is—heads I win; tails you lose. Name your stakes; post them, and my friend and I will cover them, never fear."

Tom took out of his breast-pocket a thick roll of bank-notes. Only the outside ones, it is true, were genuine flimsies; but if all had been the real thing he should have placed a decent fortune upon the table.

"Now then, Mr. What's-your-name, show your coin. We will post stakes, and play at any game you like for the entire lot. We've been drinking a little too fast; but it will be strange, for all that, if a couple of tin-horn sports can come over us."

"Perhaps not; but we'll have a shy. Warren, shell out what you have got. Ah! Well, here's a pretty good wad. Cover it, and then we'll settle how we shall play. Unlimited game you perhaps would like!"

"Yes; unlimited."

"And here, Frank Jameson, is my trump card," added O'Hara, producing a gat. "No nonsense. My name is O'Hara, the detective. I have detected you, at all events. This gentleman is a brother detective. There—there—it's of no use to kick up a fuss. We swipe all this money. Two thousand three hundred goes to the Widow Polding; the rest to this hayseed, Mr. Lobb."

"Damnation!" screamed Jameson. "What the devil! Am I dreaming?"

"Oh, no. You are known to be one of the most wide-awake guys alive. Keep cool, old top. Tragedy is mere farce when played by such lobsters as you and your friend Warren—whose real name, by the way, is Cornelius Bamford.

"To speak very seriously, Jameson, a very wise discretion has been allowed me in this matter. If you agree to reimburse the Widow Polding, and give me legal power to distribute this heap of money in equitable proportion among your dupes, you may, for the present, escape a sentence of penal servitude."

"I'd see you —— first!" foamed Jameson, who was perfectly beside himself with rage; and no wonder Warren, pale as paper, and trembling in every limb, said nothing. "I'd see you —— first. Give us our money. Keep what we've won of this fool Lobb to-night, if you like."

"That is your final decision? Very well. Now, Benson, the handcuffs. Quick! The boob is becoming violent. No nonsense, now. This isn't the first time your hands have been locked together prayer-fashion. Your friend sets you an

example; submits quietly as a lamb. Now, let's be off."

Jameson weakened.

"Well," said he, with a savage scowl, "what must be must be. I will give up the money; sign what you like. Warren will do the same."

"All right. 'Discretion is the better part of valor.'"

Some caution was required in settling the affair; but it was at last satisfactorily arranged, at about ten in the morning, in Phelps the attorney's office. Upon emerging, Frank Jameson did O'Hara the honor to say he was the most infernal thief that ever stepped in shoe leather, and he only wished——

"That you may some day be able to do me up as brown as I did you. Well, it's a natural, if not altogether a pious aspiration; and if you don't die till it's fulfilled, it's my opinion you'll live to a fine old age. Good-by, Jameson; farewell, Warren. We have passed an unusually pleasant evening together—very. And I have no doubt the evening's amusement will bear the morning's reflection. There, don't look thunder and lightning. Farewell, again. The best of friends must part."

ONE OF NATURE'S MARVELS

As one sails along the shores of Greenland, Labrador and Newfoundland he sees bleak rocks, sometimes small and sometimes rising three, four or five hundred feet out of the sea, covered as thickly with birds as a tree is covered with a swarm of bees which has just left the hive.

The birds which gather in the largest congregations are the guillemots and cormorants. Something over a century ago the great auk swarmed in the north, but this bird has become extinct. The most numerous of all the northern birds is the guillemot, called by the fishermen "murrs" and "turrs." It supplies a hundred thousand fishermen every spring and summer with the only fresh meat they get while afloat.

These birds weigh nearly two pounds. They are white on the breast, black on the back and have long, black, sharp bills. They congregate in the bays in winter in hundreds of thousands and in spring fly out and wing their way south to rocks and islands on some desolate coast. They have been seen perched in thousands on some iceberg making its southern march from Baffin's Bay in the spring.

On the west coast of Newfoundland stands an island, with perpendicular rocky sides, rising nearly 400 feet out of the sea. It is about three acres in area at the top. It seems to have been cleft from the mainland, and is safely beyond reach of duck shot.

Late in April the guillemots gather in the sea around this island in hundreds of thousands; and some fine morning, when the snow has disappeared from the top, they rise in a compact body flying first fully a thousand feet in the air, then lowering and circling for half an hour around and around the top of the island, darkening the ground with the shadow of their wings, then settling on the top and turning the white, lime-stained surface a shining black. Once settled, they will not leave the island in a body till the last of June, unless a snowstorm comes. Then they take to the sea again until the snow has melted from their nesting place.

Among the guillemots are scattered hundreds of razor bills, prettily shaped little birds that have plumage like their neighbors, but are provided with a deep and beautifully marked bill. It is very interesting to watch the mother bird take the young one from the top of the high cliff down to the sea. The mother entices the tiny bird, not larger than an English sparrow, and covered with black and white, down to the edge of the cliff. Then she lowers herself to the cliff's edge, balancing with her wings until the little one, guided by its instinct, crawls carefully upon the mother's back, crouching firmly between her wings.

Then the mother, with a very steady and gentle motion of her pinions, lowers herself down and outward into the sea, clear of rocks and surf.

Vast armies of cormorants, called by northern fishermen "shags"—large black birds with long wings, legs and necks and slow flight—also invade the bird rocks, making them a coal black from the first of May till the first of July.

These are cruel monsters, attacking and driving out guillemots, gulls, razor bills or any other birds that may take up their abode on any rock or island to which they take a fancy.

In its day the great auk was more numerous even than the cormorant. Off the coast of Newfoundland lies a group of islands called the Funks. Here in the beginning of the last century the gairfowl, with its short abortive wings, resorted in hundreds and hundreds of thousands to breed. Its feathers were soft and fine. Beneath the feathers was a thick coating of valuable down, and its flesh, after the bird had been soaked, was extremely palatable.

The great auk could not fly. Its little wings resembled fins. But it swam hundreds of miles out of the bays in spring and back again in the autumn to and from the hatching places. It was helpless on land and a prey to any enemy larger than itself.

Some naturalists used to claim that the auk came as far south as the coast of Maine, but in the opinion of most authorities the bird went no further than Newfoundland. It is just possible that the bones discovered by ornithologists farther south may have been conveyed there in the guano when it was an article of commerce.

The Return of Sinbad Constantine

BY R. T. M. SCOTT

JUST around the corner from the market and facing the Commercial House in Wibstock is situated the town police station. It occupies the ground floor of a small office building and contains one large room for the force of four constables, a small office for the chief and three cells for the possible product of their labors. Outside leafy maple trees throw their protecting shade over the front windows as if to guard against the excitement of the world without.

On a hot morning in midsummer Chief Garrick sat in his little office. His coat was unbuttoned and his feet rested on the table while he tilted back in his chair and gazed at a telegram about which he seemed in some doubt.

"Hello, chief," said Constable Johnson, entering without knocking. "Got some important news? I saw the telegraph boy come in."

"Kind of important, Charlie," replied the chief without vouchsafing any further information.

"Any chance of a reward?" asked the constable, hanging around.

"Maybe, maybe not," said Garrick.

"I see Dick Spinks caught another big pike yesterday over at Pine Dam."

"Well, he better pay more attention to his barber shop and quit fishing; he cut my chin this morning," growled the chief, still contemplating the telegram which he kept turning so that Johnson could not manoeuvre to read it.

"Anything I can do, chief, to help you about the telegram?" persisted Johnson.

"If there is you'll get orders fast enough," snapped the chief. "I expect to handle this myself. You get over to the market and see that those farmers are giving good weight. Now beat it; I'm busy."

"All right, chief," said Johnson. "You needn't be huffy about the telegram. I only thought you might like me to know about it."

Left alone Garrick reached for an old scrapbook and turned to a yellowed clipping headed "Sinbad Constantine Gets Fifteen Years." The clipping told how Detective Garrick gave sworn evidence of coming upon Constantine and two other men in the act of rifling a safe in a Broadway business office. Garrick told how he had captured Constantine, his brother detective, after a desperate struggle but had been forced to allow the escape of the other thieves. Constantine's disgrace was considered a sad and most surprising blemish upon the city police force. On the other hand, Garrick's apparently heroic action was highly lauded.

As Garrick read the article a cold, ugly expression came over his face. The air of indolent assurance fell from him and his eyes narrowed while his lower lip protruded. Back through his mind swept the old New York days before he had fallen into the soft job of chief of police of Wibstock. He remembered his bitter feud with young Constantine and a look of cruel satisfaction crossed his face as he thought of the trial at which that promising young officer had gone down to disgrace and jail.

Once more Garrick read the telegram. It ran: "Sinbad Constantine released from Sing Sing on good conduct. Will arrive in Wibstock on 11:30 a. m. train to-day." It was signed "A Friend."

There was but one conclusion in the mind of Garrick. The man he had sent to jail was coming after him and there could be but one motive. That motive was revenge.

Garrick pocketed the telegram and issued forth from his quiet kingdom to stroll slowly the few blocks to the station. He had plenty of time to meet the 11.30 train. As he walked people who knew him turned to look a second time. Suddenly he had become strange to the town. There was something unpleasant in his face.

At the edge of the station platform Garrick approached an anæmic-looking man who leaned against a lamp-post.

"How is that pool joint of yours getting on, Josh?" he queried.

"Rotten, chief," realized the man with a furtive glancing of the eye.

"Guess you'll have to come through with a hundred a month after this instead of fifty," said Garrick.

"Gawd, chief, it can't be done," was the reply. "I'll run my place on the square first or move out of town."

"Can't do either," said the chief. "I've got the goods on you. A hundred per or jail! Think it over."

"What's hit you, chief? You don't seem natural today. I was only joking. I'll do my best, but the birds in this town haven't got any coin after they've shot a few games of pool."

"Maybe they haven't, but their fathers have; use your brains," was the parting advice of the chief of police of Wibstock as the big city train pounded down the rails and came to a dragging halt.

A few drummers and some returning residents stepped from the train while Garrick stood to one side glancing casually from right to left. He pressed his right arm against his side pocket and felt therein the hard outline of his automatic. Apparently unconcerned, he was really tensed to meet the man he had sent to jail for a long term

of years. Then the last passenger for Wibstock stepped upon the platform.

Chief Garrick knew his man at once, but he was far from the kind of man he had expected to see. This man was tall and straight. While his face held seriousness and resolution, yet it also possessed good will and the blue eyes smiled back at the porter who handed down the suit case.

Garrick recognized Constantine beyond a doubt, but he was surprised that he did not have to deal with a prison wreck suffering from a keen desire for vengeance. As he gazed something happened which puzzled Garrick.

While the porter stood upon the bottom step of the car Constantine turned and put something in his hand. Plainly it was not silver for, at a distance at least, it resembled nothing so much as a tiny doll. The porter examined it curiously until his features broke into a broad grin and he backed up the steps laughing and touching his cap.

Garrick was annoyed. He hated anything that he could not understand and, because he hated it, he attacked it, which was characteristic of him. He walked straight up to Constantine.

"Whatcha give the porter, Concy?" he asked bluntly.

Slowly Constantine set down his suit case. Then he drew a handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his face.

"Are you Garrick?" he asked.

"Sure!" was the reply. "Whatcha think?"

"Even less of you than in the old days."

"Can that stuff," growled the chief. "Whatcha doing here?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"Yes, and I'm going to know, too."

"Well," said Constantine as the train began to move out, "since you really want to know, I'm not going to tell you."

As the last car passed them Constantine stepped off the platform and picked up a slip of paper that looked like money. The chief eyed it narrowly.

"Seems as if there is plenty of money in this town," continued the new arrival. "Can you pick it up all over?"

"How much is that?" asked the chief.

Constantine drew the bill through his fingers, creasing it once in one long slip. Then he opened it before the eyes of Chief Garrick. It was a thousand dollar bill. The chief's eyes bulged with a greedy look.

"Come on over," said Garrick, indicating a small bench in a grass plot to one side of the station.

Constantine placed the bill in his pocket, picked up his suit case and followed the chief. When they were seated safely beyond the earshot of people the chief opened up the conversation.

"Well, Concy, I guess it's fifty-fifty."

Constantine put his suit case between his feet and kicked it in apparent meditation.

"Do you get me?" demanded the chief.

"I'm not a fool," replied Constantine, "but I guess you had better put your proposition into words."

"I mean that we will split the thousand dollar bill."

"The money doesn't belong to you, Garrick."

"Nor to you, either," rejoined the chief. "You found it."

"In that case I should advertise it."

"Oh hell!" grunted Chief Garrick. "Come on over to my office and we'll arrange this little deal."

"I'll go with you, Garrick, but I won't do anything crooked to please you or anybody else."

"Nice little jail-bird, aren't you?" sneered the chief.

Constantine showed no answer at this taunt but got up rapidly and strode away with his suit case. The chief hurried after him with an ugly determination in his manner. Suddenly Constantine turned and pointed back to the bench.

"Looks as if you had left your gun on the bench," he said. "You must be getting clumsy."

Garrick turned, cursed roundly and walked back to the bench. He picked up his automatic and returned to Constantine.

"How in hell did you do that?" he demanded.

"Perhaps we had better go to your office and get the thing over with," replied Constantine. "You will soon be asking me again what I gave the porter when I got off the train."

Not a word was spoken while the two walked the few blocks to the police station. Arrived in his office the chief took his usual seat at his table and pointed to a chair opposite for his visitor. Constantine sat down and placed his suit case on one side of the table.

"Concy," began Garrick, "when you caught me cracking a safe in New York ten years ago it was a cinch for me to turn the tables on you and send you to jail in my place. You were a baby in my hands. If you don't want to do another stretch you'd better do as I say. Get me now, kid, and don't waste time."

Constantine's hand went to his hip pocket. Instantly the chief reached for his gun. Then he rose and stood snarling and impotent as Constantine handed him back his own gun which he had lost for the second time that morning.

"You're considerably careless with that gun of yours, chief," said Constantine. "Now what's your proposition?"

Garrick looked at the weapon in blank amazement and fury. It was a thirty-two Colt automatic. Slowly he regained control of himself and a light seemed to break over him. He pushed the gun back to Constantine.

"You're getting devilish clever, Concy," he said, "but you don't plant an unloaded gun on me."

Constantine smiled and snapped out the magazine. Both men could see that it was fully load-

ed. Then he shoved the magazine in again and slid the gun across the table to the chief.

"How do you propose to split the thousand, Garrick?" asked Constantine.

"Easiest thing you know," replied Garrick visibly relieved. "I'll give you a check for five hundred payable to cash. You slip me the thousand."

"Go to it," was the cool rejoinder.

The chief eyed his gun, hesitated, drew out a drawer, extracted a check-book and proceeded to write the check.

Meanwhile Constantine walked over to the window and stood gazing across the shaded street with his back turned to the room.

Garrick looked at his visitor's back and then glanced at the pistol lying upon the table. Quietly he took up the gun and silently released the magazine. It was empty. Quickly and noiselessly he reached into the drawer from which he had taken the check-book and brought out a second and similar automatic. Then he placed the empty one in the drawer while he laid the new gun where the old one had been.

Constantine turned slowly and returned to the table. Instead of sitting down he stood with one foot on the chair. In his hand, resting upon his bent knee, was a large white handkerchief. With his other hand he leaned over and drummed reflectively upon his suit case.

"Chief," he said, "you would like to shoot me and plant a gun on me to show that you did it in self-defense."

Garrick started as if his thoughts had been read and his hand moved toward the gun on the table. Constantine glanced sharply at the gun and then quickly placed his handkerchief on the table with his hand upon it. There was a metallic sound as the handkerchief touched the table.

"Not a move, Garrick," said Constantine, "if you value your life."

Garrick eyed the handkerchief nervously and made no further move while Constantine, with his free hand, drew out the folded slip of money from his pocket. He opened it out flat and held it so that the chief could plainly see it. Then, for an instant, his other hand left the handkerchief while he again creased the bill into one long slip and dropped it on the table just as the door opened and Constable Johnson entered.

"Did you ring, chief?" asked Johnson.

"No, I didn't," growled Garrick as he quickly shoved the bill into a long envelope upon which he scribbled an address. "Now you're here, though, you can take this," he added.

"Sure, chief," replied Johnson, taking the envelope.

"By the way, Garrick," broke in Constantine, "I wonder if your officer would be kind enough to get that check of yours cashed while he is out."

"Oh, yes, Charlie," said Garrick, "you might cash this check for my friend. I'm taking a little flyer on the market."

"All right, chief," said Johnson. "Guess that was what the telegram was about, eh?"

An ominous frown overspread the chief's face and Johnson departed hurriedly with the letter and the check.

Left alone once more Constantine's hand fell again upon his handkerchief and he was the first to speak.

"Garrick," he said, "you are rotten all through. If you could kill me it would save your skin, but it would do me no good to kill you. Now let's get down to facts. You have an empty gun there, although you think it loaded, and I have a little surprise under my handkerchief in case you have another gun near. I sent you a wire signed 'A Friend' to bring you to the station and to make you think you had an advantage over me. I have been playing with you ever since. I came here to clear myself of the charge on which you sent me to jail. Well, I have done it."

"The devil you have, my young rooster," snarled Garrick. "You're mighty clever, but you can't bamboozle an old bird like me all the time. I've got you now and you're going back to where you came from, and that's jail."

Garrick's words rang true. They were too sincere to be bluff when coming from the lips of no greater artist. Constantine recognized this fact. He was silent for a moment with an expressionless face.

"It's back to jail or the undertaker for you, my boy," continued Garrick with venom in his voice. He deliberately took up and toyed with the pistol.

"That thing's empty," said Constantine. "Look at the magazine."

"I'll take a chance. You can't bluff me when I've once seen your game."

"See if this is bluff," said Constantine, opening his suit case on the table. "Do you like music?"

With his hands in the suit case Constantine worked at somethnig for a few seconds while Garrick watched him disdainfully, pistol in hand. Soon the well-known tones of a phonograph issued from the bag in a bit of popular dance music.

"Cut the comedy," growled Garrick.

"It will be tragedy soon enough," was the reply.

The music stopped and there was a short blank. Then the voice of Constantine came from the bag.

"I'm not a fool, but I guess you had better put your proposition into words," came Constantine's voice.

Chief Garrick sat up rigid with attention, the blood slowly leaving his face.

"I mean that we will split the thousand dollar bill," continued the phonograph changing to the deep surly tones of Chief Garrick.

"I've got it all here, Garrick," said Constantine, stopping the machine. "I had this apparatus ready to record. There are two springs to start and stop the cylinder. I can press them from the outside with my foot or hand. Part of one side of the suit case is very thin to admit sound. The evidence is all here. Among other things you deliberately told this little witness that you perjured yourself to send me to jail. Now it's your move. What are you going to do?"

"Shoot you dead," replied Garrick in a cold, low voice.

"With an empty pistol?" laughed Constantine who was standing some distance from his handkerchief but keeping his eye on it and the chief.

"Empty nothing! Here's the empty gun," retorted Garrick, producing it from the drawer. "How you did it I don't know, but you lost your chance when you turned your back on me at the window a minute ago. Now I'm going to croak you and the sooner the better."

As he spoke Garrick raised his gun, while his eyes took on that cold, strained look that comes before the expected explosion.

"You forget the porter on the train," remarked Constantine coolly.

"What d'ya mean?" strained Garrick through taut muscles, but the hand with the automatic wavered.

"Look at the window," was the reply.

There, glaring wildly with his nose pressed against the glass, was the negro porter who had handed Constantine off the train.

Garrick glanced toward the window and then stopped to stare at the black face.

Swiftly Constantine leaned over the table and twisted the gun from the chief's hand.

"Damn you!" cursed Garrick and then stopped, at a loss for words or action.

Constantine pitched the captured pistol into the waste basket. He threw after it the second pistol which the chief had taken from the drawer. Then he lifted his handkerchief and revealed to the astonished gaze of Garrick nothing more deadly than a cigarette case from which he extracted and lighted a cigarette. Lighting the cigarette seemed to be a signal to the porter, who lifted the window sash and bounded into the room in a most determined manner.

"Rastus," said Constantine, "the Chief of Police of Wibstock would like to see what I gave you when I stepped off the train."

"Yassah, boss!" replied the porter and produced from his pocket a little manikin which he placed before the chief on the table.

It appeared to be a folded and twisted bank note and was a fair imitation of the proportions and official cap of Chief Garrick. On the front of the cap a number was visible. The number was one thousand.

Garrick slumped in his chair and stared stupidly at the tiny figure. Plainly his brain was muddled. He felt himself getting beyond his depth in an unknown sea of strange dangers.

In the midst of a dead quiet the door was suddenly burst open and a tall, pale man rushed into the room. His eyes were blazing with anger and, with no thought for anyone but Chief Garrick, he threw an envelope upon the table.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded. "I'm done with you. I quit. Send me to jail, if you like! You send Johnson to my pool room with stuff that's foolish. Nobody could pass that fake money. You're a fool! A damn fool! I'm through! Do you get me? I'm through!"

"I don't understand, Josh," began Garrick weakly and then stopped.

Helplessly, like a child, he took up the envelope and fumbed until he took out the thousand dollar bill that he had obtained from Constantine. He smoothed it out flat on the table and then turned it over. As he did so the color left his face and his head dropped upon his arms on the table. Printed in large letters on the back of the supposed bill was: "*Imitation money used by Professor Sinbad Constantine in his world famous conjuring illusions.*"

It began to dawn on the man from the pool room that something had been happening before he arrived.

"What's up?" he asked blankly, staring about the room.

"The end," snapped Constantine, rising and addressing the huddled figure of Chief Garrick.

"Years ago you swore away my freedom and sent me to jail a wrecked man. You made me pay for your crime. Fortunately prison did not break me. I found a friend and discovered that real men are not to be judged by the color of the skin. This is not a Pullman porter. He is my partner in the conjuring profession. During years together in prison we have practiced sleight-of-hand with bits of rock, potato skins or anything that came to hand. It kept our spirits up and has given us an interesting profession now that we are free. Now it is your turn to feel the law, but I shall give you a sporting chance. Here is a typewritten statement of your guilt. Sign it and I shall mail it in to Headquarters. That will give you a twelve hours start."

Garrick raised his head slightly and felt for the paper which Constantine shoved toward him. He scrawled his signature without looking.

Constantine placed the paper in his pocket and turned to go as the door opened and Johnson entered with a large roll of money in his hand.

"I think," said Constantine, taking the money, "that our friend has had fully five hundred dollars worth of conjuring today."

"Some trouble on the train, chief?" asked Johnson as Constantine and the seeming Pullman porter left the office.

"Get out!" roared Garrick.

Trailed From France

BY EDWARD ALLEN NIXON

ONE morning, on the first of May, Mr. Pinkton called me into his office, and there I found French Fransois, another detective.

"Waters," said Mr. Pinkton, "you will, for the present, render Francois all the assistance in your power in unraveling a snarl of crime, the straightening out of which has brought Fransois all the way from France."

"I shall be only too glad of an opportunity to work with Fransois, for I am sure the case you mention can be no common one," I replied.

"You are right. But as Fransois will explain the remarkable affair, I need not do so."

Thus replying, Mr. Pinkton hurriedly left the office in answer to the ring of the bell of the consultation room.

French Fransois closed the door, and turning to me, he said:

"The affair I wish you to assist me in is one of a double crime. I will relate it to you in full."

"Do so, by all means."

"Very good. To commence at the beginning. Early one morning the inhabitants of the picturesque, sleepy little village of Beaudires, in France, were horrified to learn of the double crime in question.

"The village of Beaudires, it may be said, was almost entirely owned by a young widow lady, whose husband, M. Paul Angeleau, had died two years previously, leaving his widow sole legatee in trust for their infant daughter.

"It was the news of Madame Angeleau's sudden death and the mysterious disappearance of the child heiress that aroused the people of the peaceful village to a state of excitement most intense.

"Madam Angeleau had, with the exception of a trivial nervous ailment, been in her usual health the previous day.

"The evening of her death, however, she betrayed sudden symptoms of a serious nature, and the family physician was sent for in hot haste.

"In the briefest possible time the man of medicine arrived, and his coming was followed by a searching examination.

"Then there came a startling *expose.*

"The examination of the physician revealed the fearful fact that Madame Angeleau was the victim of a poisoner.

"'The lady is being secretly poisoned, and I believe the drug employed to be hydrocyanic acid, one of the deadliest poisons known to science.'

"Thus said the physician.

"The consternation of the household may well be imagined.

"All were excited.

"There was confusion, and the evidence of horror—inability to act.

"But the physician retained his presence of mind.

"Prompt measures were at once employed by the medical man, and besides averting the danger he placed a test in the hands of the confidential nurse of Madame Angeleau.

"This woman was implicitly trusted, and had every reason to be devoted to her kind and most indulgent mistress.

"In spite of the physician's care, however, Madame Angeleau died.

"The physician had left the house, feeling assured that all danger was passed.

"What was his surprise when a servant from Madame Angeleau's rushed breathlessly into his office with the astounding intelligence of her decease.

"The doctor could scarcely credit the servant's statement that his mistress was even then cold in the icy embrace of death.

"At the full speed of a swift horse the physician hastened to return once more to the residence of Madame Angeleau, only to find the horrible news was all but too true.

"Madame Angeleau was indeed past the aid of earthly skill.

"Again the man of science made a searching examination.

"Then an added horror was revealed.

"Springing up from the bedside, when his investigation was concluded, the doctor cried, in thrilling tones that rang with an intonation of horror and indignation:

"'Madame Angeleau died from a repeated and larger dose of the hydrocyanic acid—the very drug I warned all against but an hour ago!'

"The nurse was not present.

"Inquiry was made for her, and a search instituted.

"Not a trace of her could be discovered.

"She had disappeared, and with her the infant heiress—little Lenoir.

"The woman's name was Jerron—Zela Jerron.

"At once suspicion pointed her out as the assassin.

"The stealing of the child, moreover, gave rise to the supposition that the murder of Madame Angeleau was but the first act in this drama of crime, and that something more—perhaps some deeper plot—was on foot.

"Madame Angeleau was *my sister.*

"I was then employed as a detective in Paris.

"A telegram summoned me to the scene of the crime, whither I at once hastened.

"A review of all the circumstances of the case convince me that I had to deal with deep plotters, and that the woman, Zela Jerron, was not acting alone.

"I suspected there was some one else in the background.

"But it was my theory that the child had been stolen for blackmail purposes.

"Beside the body of my murdered sister I took a solemn vow never to abandon the search for the female assassin until I had brought her to justice, and rescued the child she had stolen.

"I took up the trail at once, a clue was found, and I tracked Zela Jerron to England, and to London. Thence I discovered she had fled to America, taking my little niece Lenoir Angeleau with her.

"Then I crossed the ocean, arriving safely in America.

"I began the quest again, but the trail was lost, and months of searching failed to reveal it again.

"I had letters of introduction to the most famous American detectives, and finally I entered the service of Mr. Pinkton, hoping that fate might place me once again on the trail of Zela Jerron while trailing other criminals.

"Mr. Pinkton agreed to conceal my identity, for I deemed it was important to conceal the fact of my presence in America.

"I assumed the name of French Fransois, but my real name is——"

He pronounced the name of one of the most famous Parisian man-hunters.

"Yesterday I received a letter from the attorney of the Angeleau estate in Paris, stating that a mysterious communication, sent from Chicago, U. S. A., had just been received by him, offering to return the child Lenoir Angeleau for a reward of one-half the estate to which she is the only lawful legatee.

"I believe the woman I seek and the stolen child are here in the city of Chicago, and I desire you to help me find them.

"If we succeed you shall find this the best paying case you ever undertook in all your life," he went on.

"With all my heart, but with no hope of reward, as a brother in the profession I'll help you to the end," I said.

He pressed my hand.

The compact was made.

The same day work began.

I was provided with a photograph of the woman, Zela Jarron, and also one of the lost heiress.

My brother is a Chicago physician.

The following evening, in answer to an invitation from him, French Fransois and I, after a day of unavailing search for Zela Jerron, rode out to his suburban residence on horseback.

My brother's wife was an invalid, and that evening as her husband with myself and Fransois sat grouped about her easy-chair in the open bay-window, from which a view of the drive leading to the stable could be obtained, a lady clad in a black riding-habit rode forth and took the highway leading to the city.

At the sight of her French Fransois gave a slight start, and turning to my brother, he asked carelessly:

"Who is the fair horsewoman?"

My sister answered the interrogatory.

"She is my nurse, Miss Lane," she said.

"Ah, she rides well," remarked Fransois; and no more was said about her.

The hour for our departure came.

We took our leave and repaired to the stable.

In the rear of the house Fransois suddenly paused and pressed my arm.

"I have found her," he almost hissed.

"Found who?"

This question I asked in surprise.

"Zela Jerron!"

"When did you make the discovery?"

"The nurse whom we saw ride away in the direction of the city is Zela Jerron."

"But she is a blonde. The other Zela Jerron is a brunette."

"I know."

"Ah, she is then in disguise?"

"Exactly."

"What do you propose?"

"To make sure of her identity—for there is yet a shadow of doubt in my mind—and then arrest her at once."

"When will you arrest her?"

"To-night."

"Then you propose to await her return?"

"I do. We will remain concealed here behind the ornamental urn."

"Yes."

"And when she comes from the stable on her return from the city I will confront her, while you step forth behind her and cut off her retreat in case she should attempt to rush into the house. I am well disguised, and she will not know me at first, although she has often seen me at my sister's house in France, and is aware of the fact that I am a detective."

I concealed myself on one side of the ornamental urn.

Fransois crouched down in the shrubbery on the other.

We had not long to wait.

Presently the woman arrived.

She rode to the stable, gave her horse to the groom, and approached.

Suddenly Fransois arose behind her.

She wheeled about at the sound he made, and confronted him, while I silently stepped forth and stood behind her—between her and the door.

Fransois threw himself into a careless, easy attitude, with one elbow resting on the great stone urn, as he said, with a sarcastic smile:

"Pardon me, Zela, but you are looking well."

The woman started as though she had received a galvanic shock.

"Who are you?" she cried, while her face assumed the hue of death.

"I am the brother of Madame Angeleau, whom you murdered!" thundered Fransois, in a terrible voice.

Quick as thought the female assassin leaped backward, and at the same instant a dagger flashed in her hand.

With the weapon uplifted, she sprang at Fransois, shrieking:

"You shall never take me alive!"

But the blade did not reach his heart, as she intended.

I seized her arm, and wrenched away the blade.

She rushed by me, and with a wild laughter her hand went to her lips; then she flung something away into the grass.

"You have hunted me to my death, but you shall never find the child!" she cried.

The next moment she fell upon the ground.

We raised her, but she was stone dead.

I found the object she had flung away.

It was a vial marked hydrocyanic acid. She had died by the same drug that had killed her victim.

In her pocket was found the receipt for rent of a house in the city, which we visited. There we found the missing heiress, and among Zela Jerron's papers were certain letters showing that one Havre, a notorious Parisian criminal, whose wife Zela Jerron secretly was, had plotted the crime she had executed, and that it was their purpose to hold the child a captive until half her fortune was paid for her return.

Fransois and the child returned to France, but he left with me a substantial token in the shape of a draft on his New York banker.

THE TOAD HAS ITS USES

FORMERLY the toad was held to be a venomous reptile, but in our own day its habits have been more carefully observed, and its great value to the gardener has been established. Inasmuch as the toad destroys many species of harmful insects we should cultivate its friendship.

Now every tidy housewife detests the cockroach, the mouse and other vermin. Two or three domestic toads, it is said, will keep any premises clear of these. The toad is possessed of a timid and retiring disposition, loving dark corners and shady places, but under kind treatment becomes quite tame.

Many instances might be cited of pet toads remaining several years in a family and doing most valuable services, with no other compensation than that of immunity from persecution. All that is necessary to secure the cooperation of the toad, indoors or out, is to provide it with cool and safe retreats by day and convenient access to water. It will then go forth to the performance of its nocturnal duty "without money and without price."

In Europe toads are carried to the cities to market and are purchased by the horticulturists, who by their aid are enabled to keep in check the multiplication of the insects that prey upon their fruits, flowers, etc.

There was a wise old toad that lived for more than thirty-six years in a hole beneath the doorstep of a French farmhouse. How old it was when first noticed no one could say, but it had probably lived for a long time before familiarity with the sight of man emboldened it to rest tranquilly on the doorstep over which persons were constantly passing.

The step became the batrachian's hunting ground, where, with little trouble, it might capture the ants which persisted in crossing and recrossing it. The toad, hunting for its supper, came to be regarded as one of the sights of the neighborhood, and certainly the skilful manner in which it used its wonderfully formed tongue entitled it as an expert among hunters.

For one thing, it showed wonderful skill in judging distance; the tongue was never darted out until the insect came within a certain range. The accuracy of the creature's aim was another matter for surprise. The insects were generally in motion when the tongue was darted against them, but the arrow never failed to hit its mark.

The rapidity with which the tongue was shot forth excited much wonder. The operation is a complex one. The tongue is doubled or rolled up when in the mouth; therefore, a twofold action is required, an uncoiling of the weapon, and then the darting of it forth.

The withdrawing of the tongue, with the captured insect on the top, was not less remarkable. Notwithstanding the rapid motion, the fineness of the tongue tip and the struggles of the prey, the victim was never dropped.

The toad was so tame that it might rightly be called domesticated. It would remain quietly in one hand and take its food from the other, provided a leaf was placed on the hand which held it. Without this precaution the warmth of the human hand was evidently annoying and uncomfortable to the chilly little fellow.

Few things seemed to please it more than to be placed on a table in the evening when the lamp was lighted. It would look around with the greatest confidence in its gleaming eye, and when insects were placed on the table it snapped them up with even greater rapidity than in its day huntings.

In this way the toad lived for thirty-six years, the pet of the neighborhood. It might have lived many years more had not a tame but spiteful raven pecked out one of its eyes.

In The Next Room

BY FANNIE T. BAXTER

ONE night Pat McCoy occupied a room in the Hoffman House. He was a city detective and had just retired, when he heard the sound of excited voices in the next room.

Pat listened. The instinct of his profession made him an eavesdropper. The first words chained his attention strongly.

"I cannot longer bear to live a lie!" exclaimed a female voice.

"I trust, my dear, that all may soon be revealed," replied a man.

"To-day, after an absence of a year in California, Uncle Judson Hanson has returned."

"Yes, I know that; and with his coming all your fears return."

"Yes, I fear he may discover that I am a mother, while yet he does not know that I am a wife."

"Ethel, I will tell him our secret. I will tell your uncle that, when he refused me your hand, five years ago, we were secretly married."

"Yes, tell him, Harold; and tell him that it was to seek a fortune in the western land of gold that you left me two days after our union."

"He shall know all, for I can prove to him I am worthy of your hand."

"How do you mean?"

"I have discovered that Jerre Jennings, the speculator's son, who is learning the banking business with your uncle, has forged his name several times during his absence, and thus appropriated large sums of money to his own use."

"And that is the man whose wife uncle urged me to become! Oh, Harold, how my uncle has been deceived in him. Let *me* tell uncle all, and explain to him the innocent deception of which he has been made the victim. Let me tell him my child—my little Bertha—was born during your absence in California."

"No, dear, I must be the first to reveal the truth."

" As you will, but it will be my proud duty to tell my uncle how you toiled and tried, for four long years, to win a fortune in a manful struggle."

"Yes, you may tell him that, and I may add that I had a modest fortune once, and that I was about to settle my affairs to return home, when an unlucky speculation swept away all my gains. Then, crushed and disappointed, I was ill."

"You were ill, almost unto death."

"And when I was sufficiently recovered I returned, as a tired bird beats back to its nest."

"And I welcomed you. Welcomed you as a loving wife should."

"You did, you did."

"And I it was who proposed that you should enter my uncle's bank, and gain his confidence and respect."

"Yes, you fancied that when your uncle knew my real character, he would forgive us?"

"I did. You followed my advice?"

"To the letter."

"You applied to uncle for a situation, and he was much surprised?"

"Indeed he was, but he offered me the situation, on one condition."

"I know what that was."

"Yes, that I would never seek to make you my wife."

"And you promised that?"

"I did. You were *even then* my wife. It was not necessary ever again to seek to make you what you already were."

"I understand. Uncle was deceived."

"Completely; and he sought more than ever to gain your consent to a union with Jennings."

"Jennings renewed his hateful attentions. Do you know that I have half feared that he has in some way gained a knowledge of our secret?"

"I did not know that you harbored such a thought. But do not let that trouble you. I feel that the day is coming when I can claim you as my wife before all the world."

"And then I can indeed be a mother to our dear little girl. It has been a great trial never to dare openly to visit my little one or acknowledge myself her mother."

"I know it has. But come, we will go now, and your uncle shall learn our secret."

The couple left the next room, and McCoy soon fell asleep, little thinking that the conversation was but the prologue of a strange drama of crime, in which he would be called upon to play a part.

The following day the detective sat in his office looking over a report of a famous murder trial then in progress, when the door opened, and a neatly dressed young woman, about whom there was an air of breeding and real culture, entered.

"You are Mr. McCoy?" she asked in a clear, musical voice.

He started. Where had he heard that voice? In an instant he remembered.

She was the lady he had heard conversing with "Harold" at the hotel.

"Such is my name," he replied. Then he placed a chair. The lady became seated.

"I am in trouble," she said.

"Can I assist you?"

"Yes."

She was silent a moment.

Then she said:

"My *husband* is under arrest for a murder of which he is innocent."

"When was the crime of which he is accused committed?"

"Last night."

"And the victim?"

"My uncle, Judson Hanson, the banker."

"Then there should be an account of the crime in the paper. Ah! here it is. I had overlooked it," Pat said, as he saw the heading.

"Tell me all about the case—how your husband came to be suspected, and who he is."

"My husband's name is Harold Carville, and he is a clerk in my uncle's bank. We were secretly married five years ago. Last night my husband told my uncle about it, and he forgave us. Harold also exposed the dishonesty of another clerk named Jennings, who had been robbing my uncle. I left my husband alone with my uncle in the library. When I returned, a few moments later, I found my uncle lying upon the floor, stone dead. He had been murdered. A pistol-ball had penetrated his heart. I uttered a scream and called my husband's name. But he was gone.

"I rushed to the open window, and in the moonlight I saw one of the female servants, an Irish girl by the name of Nora Malone, creeping out of sight around the corner. I continued to call for help. Presently the household was alarmed. A search was made, and five thousand dollars was found to be missing from my uncle's safe, which he kept in the room where the murder was committed. The servants all knew that my husband was the last person with my uncle, and his mysterious disappearance aroused suspicion.

"The police came. Nora Malone stated that my husband was left alone with my uncle. A search was made. Within two hours Harold was arrested. The five thousand dollars was found on his person, done up as he had taken it, in one package, from the safe, it was supposed. His clothes were torn and disordered. He was hastening along the street in the direction of the nearest police-station when he was captured. My husband explains his conduct by saying that a man wearing a mask, who must have been admitted to the house by one of the servants, suddenly entered the library, and shot my uncle as he stood at the safe, which he had just opened. My husband further says that the assassin did not see him at the moment he fired the fatal shot, as he was behind a screen.

"He leaped for the assassin's throat, when the red-handed wretch snatched the package of money from the safe and vaulted through the window. My husband followed him. Then followed a long chase which led far from the house. But Harold gained on the thief and assassin, who suddenly stopped, and threw away the package of money he had stolen.

"Then, while Harold paused to secure it, the crook dashed into an alley and disappeared. He failed to find any trace of him after that, and he was returning home when he was arrested upon the charge of murder.

"This is my husband's story, but Nora Malone flatly contradicts it in one particular. She says she was on duty to answer the bell, and never left the chair in the hall where she was seated when my husband entered uncle's room, until the fatal shot was discharged. She swears she admitted no one."

"Whom do you suspect?" asked the detective.

"I do not know whom to suspect."

"Where was this Jennings, who had been secretly robbing your uncle, at the time of the murder?" asked McCoy.

"That I do not know, but I think he was in bed. You see, he boarded at my uncle's house, and, complaining of a headache, he retired to his room an hour before the murder. About an hour after the murder was committed he came downstairs rubbing his eyes and saying that he had just awakened. I should add that besides swearing that she admitted no one to the house, Nora Malone says that no living person entered my uncle's room except Harold the night of the murder. That woman's evidence will *hang* my husband, unless you can prove it is false. Oh, sir, help me."

"I will. Now, tell me, is this Irish girl pretty, or otherwise?"

"What a strange question. I don't know why you should care to know anything about her personal appearance, but I will say she is a very pretty girl, very buxom."

"Very good. You must get me a situation about the house as a servant."

"I can do that; the butler has just left."

"Very well; when you return home, tell the household that you have engaged a new butler, a jolly Irishman by the name of Pat O'Toole, who will be on hand in an hour."

The lady promised to do this.

Pat had already formed a theory, and fancied he saw his way clear to the solution of this murder mystery. He set out for the house where he was to play the part of butler. And the part was natural for him, for he was an Irishman.

Pat was duly established in charge of the wine-cellar, and that night set about making himself agreeable to Nora Malone and the housekeeper.

Late that evening, in the kitchen, he plied them well with wine. They had a jolly time, and while Pat cheered her on, Nora Malone danced an Irish reel.

The detective got Nora intoxicated, and while in that state she confessed that Jennings had promised to marry her.

She further confessed that Jennings had come down from his room, and entered Mr. Hanson's just before the fatal shot was fired.

Further, she said he had returned to the house by the back way while the police were making an investigation, and she had admitted him, and he had slipped up to his room by the kitchen-stairs.

So it was Jennings that Harold Carville had followed.

Upon this evidence Jennings was convicted, while Carville was discharged.

Current News

LEATHER FROM RABBIT SKINS

According to American Consul Norton of Sydney, Australia, a secret process, said to be unknown hitherto to the tannery trade, has been discovered by an Australian for making leather from rabbit skins and recovering the fur as a by-product in felt making. A company has been formed in Sydney to turn this discovery to practical use, having established works capable of handling about 100,000 skins a week. The leather has already been utilized in Sydney in the manufacture of boot and shoe uppers, handbags, gloves and other articles.

PREACHER'S NOSE BURNED

Branding on the nose with a hot iron was charged as part of the initiation ceremony of the Iron Cross Lodge of the Grand United Order of Seven Royal Knights in a damage suit brought in the District Court, Camden, N. J., by the Rev. James R. White, pastor of Zion Methodist Episcopal Church

The minister said that in addition to branding him on the nose, the knights laid him in a coffin, hoodwinked him, and held the hot branding iron over his face. It was so hot, the minister said, that the knight holding it dropped it, burning part of the Rev. Mr. White's nose away. Judge Garfield Pancoast adjourned the case and summoned the members of the degree team who carried out the initiation. The Rev. Mr. White is suing for $5,000 damages.

HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION AND CRIME

Prof. Wagner, director of the Vienna clinic for mental diseases, was recently the object of a startling experiment which is reported in the Journal published by the American Medical Association.

A girl called at his office and handed him a letter pretended to be written by her medical adviser.

While reading the letter Wagner suddenly noticed that the visitor leveled a revolver at his head. However, the woman dropped the weapon without firing. She was handed over to the police in a state of complete indifference, and nothing could be got out of her. At 10 A. M. on the next day she suddenly awoke from what seemed to be a hypnotic sleep and gave correct answers to all questions. On the same day there appeared in the papers a letter in which a certain man explained that he had put the girl under hypnotic suggestion and that Prof. Wagner was responsible for the death of her fiance and that she should take vengeance on the "murderer."

He had also provided her with the pistol, but had taken care to make it absoluetly unfit for doing harm and had ordered his medium not to shoot at the professor, but simply to aim at him and to awake next day at 10 A. M. All this he did because the professor stanchly adhered to the opinion that it is impossible to make a person commit a crime while under hypnotic influence. The professor was taken completely unawares and the crime could have been committed, if so ordered. The incident brought the hypnotist into the police court. The professor maintains that the whole thing was a bluff because a crime is impossible. The opposing faction contends that the crime was averted only by the strict order of the hypnotist. The police will stop all public performances of this kind. Only scientific researches by competent men will be permitted hereafter.

TRAVELING SAND DUNES

As one makes the ascent of the Andes from the Pacific port of Molendo, Peru, following the line of the Southern of Peru Railway, the climb to the divide is broken by two great steps or widespreading shelves of desert or pampa.

On the first of these steps, about two hours' steep climb from the sea, and at an altitude of from 4,000 to 5,000 feet, are located the famous drifting sand hills of Peru. The plateau is here about 20 miles wide, the air thin and dry and no trace of vegetation to be seen—only these gigantic crescent-shaped sand dunes dotting the pampa as far as the eye can see. Composed of fine, gray crystal sand, they gleam white against the brown of the desert, and their horns point toward the prevailing south wind of this region. They are from 15 to 25, or even 30, feet high, 20 feet in breadth across the thick part of the crescent and sometimes 100 feet from horn to horn. So tightly is the sand packed that the feet of the horses or mules make little impression in stepping on it.

These sand hills, called mendanos (pronounced ma-dan-yos—possibly a Latinized form of dunes), travel with almost imperceptible slowness, writes G. E. McDonald in the Scientific American. When they threaten the railway track they can sometimes be diverted by piling up blocks of stone in their paths. Otherwise the railway bed has to be altered to go around them. An analysis of the soil of this region shows that it would be very fertile if irrigated.

ELECTRIC MARVELS WITH CRYSTALS

Interesting experiments with Rochelle salts at the International Communications Conference are reported in Science and Invention.

The first surprise was a demonstration with Rochelle salt crystals. "When it comes to gymnastics," explained the engineer in charge, "no one has anything on the Rochelle salt crystals." And every one agreed.

It was shown that when these crystals are twisted or pressed an electric current flows from them—is squeezed from them, as the engines put it. And conversely, when a current flows into them they wiggle and wabble in a most capricious fashion. There was a phonograph with the ordinary reproduction produced by a salt crystal. From this crystal wires were led to another crystal placed in a phonographic horn, and when the phonograph was turned on, the first crystal wriggled, producing currents which made the second crystal wiggle so violently that rich music poured from the horn.

How to open a safe without knowing the combination or wrecking the strong box was next demonstrated.

BEATING SLOT MACHINES

"You would be surprised," said the telephone man, "to see the amount and variety of junk sorted from the nickel-in-the-slot machine telephones in New York City every month.

"Last month we had two small barrels of assorted coins, slugs and other things. There are various foreign coins, such as German 2½ pfennig pieces. They may be about the size of a nickel, but they are of considerable less value. On the other hand, an occasional gold coin glistens forth from the dingy pile of iron and copper. When one of these comes along it helps to make up the deficiency, but in the long run we lose.

"Probably you know," continued the telephone man, "that some rural districts are equipped with what are known as farmer lines, that is a local service. Farmers are not noted for the great amount of ready cash they carry about with them; furthermore, it is inconvenient for persons in isolated districts to be always supplied with change. So arrangement is made with some local merchant who acts as a banker. He sells the farmer slugs which are the size and shape of a five-cent piece. Now it must be that a lot of men are drifting in from the towns every day and fetching along pocketfuls of these iron slugs, for we are constantly finding them.

"There is another interesting phase about this petty form of dishonesty. Of course you know that New York is a gum-chewing town and probably the habit has its mental effect, especially on the young. It isn't at all likely that a boy could chew gum all the way from the Bronx to the Battery every day and even up to lunch time without thinking after a while of something else to do with the gum. We sometimes find two pennies stuck together with chewing gum and sometimes a wad of gum sandwiched between two pieces of tin. Then, of course, all the nickels in New York that have holes in them and those that have been chipped eventually find their way into pay station phones."

ACCUSES WOMAN OF WITCHCRAFT

Two months ago the two-and-one-half-year-old daughter of Mrs. Sophie Stern, of 518 West 145th street, was as well and happy as any little girl of her age in Washington Heights. Of late the child's health has waned. She has gradually lost the power of her legs and the reason therefor has been the occasion of much excited talk among the womenfolk in the neighborhood.

All their suppressed excitement flared out into cries of "Witch! witch!" in the Washington Heights Court the other day when Magistrate Jesse Silberman heard a complaint brought by Mrs. Bessie Avorin against Mrs. Stern, the technical charge being annoyance on the street. The cries were directed against Mrs. Avorin by friends of Mrs. Stern, who believe with the mother, that witchcraft has been the cause of the little Stern girl's physical disability.

Others in the courtroom were sympathetic to the cause of Mrs. Avorin, who said she was no witch at all, and those friends indulged in a general hissing of the partisans who cried "Witch!" until the judge was compelled to hammer lustily with his gavel for order, at the same time wondering if he were really holding court in the twentieth century.

Mrs. Avorin, who brought the charge and who lives in the same apartment that shelters the Sterns, said Mrs. Stern and others had annoyed her on the street, following her with cries of "Witch! Witch!" those cries being taken up by the children and making life uncomfortable for the complainant.

The magistrate called Mrs. Stern to the stand and asked point-blank:

"Do you believe this woman to be a witch?"

"Yes," replied the defendant, unhesitatingly, and then she told the story of her little daughter.

"Up to a couple of months ago," said Mrs. Stern, "my baby was strong and healthy, but this woman cursed her and now her little legs are paralyzed. Your honor, that woman is a witch. Two hundred years ago she would have been burned at the stake."

"Oh, the witch! the wtich!" came in groans from the auditors, who long ago had sat in judgment on the case at the neighborhood court, where the baby carriages are drawn up in a circle all during the pleasant days. Hisses came from the non-witch believers, and again there was lively use of the court's gavel.

After considering the matter a moment the magistrate dismissed the summons against Mrs. Avorin for lack of evidence.

FEATHERWEIGHT BABY

"Name, Geraldine Rae Cutter. Address No. 619 South Phillips Avenue, Sioux Falls, S. D. Born July 25, 1920. Weight at birth, 2 1-2 pounds. Weight to-day, 7 1-2 pounds."

Such is part of the interesting record of South Dakota's featherweight baby girl, Geraldine Rae Cutter, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Cutter, No. 619 South Phillips Avenue. Geraldine was born at McKennan Hospital and lived for two weeks in an incubator before going to her new home.

Before Geraldine was four weeks old she was taken to Viroqua, Wis., to visit relatives. On the trip she was carried in a small basket. Normal in every way Geraldine has gained rapidly in weight.

On October 27 a son weighing three pounds was born to Mr. and Mrs. Arthur E. Gilbert, at Buffalo, S. D. This youngster was believed to be the prize lightweight baby of the State until Geraldine's record was proudly announced by her parents

Geraldine has already outgrown her first pair of booties.

THREATEN TO BURN WOMAN AS WITCH

Branded as a witch, blamed for sickness, death and misfortune in her neighborhood and threatened with burning, Mrs. Augustino Catario, of Ellwood City, Pa., seventy-five years old and residing alone, has appealed to the law for protection.

So intense is the feeling over the case in the Italian quarter that the police say they fear serious trouble between two factions that have formed. One faction is composed of persons convinced that the aged woman really is a witch, and that she ought to be dealt with accordingly. The other faction declares that Mrs. Catario is a victim of superstition and persecution.

In the meantime Antonio Capriano, accused by Mrs. Catario of starting the witchcraft story, is under arrest on a technical charge of disorderly conduct. He will receive a hearing before Justice of the Peace J. D. Swick.

At a preliminary hearing Mrs. Cataro told Justice Swick of the slights, insults and threats to which she had been subjected. Friends of Capriano merely point to the woman's accusations as further evidence of malignant power.

According to testimony of Mrs. Catario and others, Capriano first circulated the story that she was a witch shortly before sailing for Italy eighteen months ago. Capriano told friends, it was testified, that she was in league with evil spirits and as a result had supernatural powers enabling her to cast spells over others; that she had caused the illness and death of several children. He returned from Italy recently.

Mrs. Catario said that women avoided her in the streets, that children fled in fright and that she was ostracized by neighbors. Threats had been made, she said, that unless she left Elwood City she would be tied to a stake and burned to death. She had prayed for months, she said, to save her from the violence threatened.

Mrs. Catario, a widow, has lived in the Italian quarters here for years. The police are keeping her home under surveillance

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STRANGE LIVES.

Mankind is not alone in growing old and dying, writes Arthur Benington, in the Popular Science Monthly. It shares this fate with all creatures, animal and vegetable. It seems that every species has its own allotted term of life, to which it adheres closely as an average, and Weismann has shown that this term among animals is usually that required for reproducing its kind and giving its offspring such parental care as it may need. Among plants, the fungi live but a few days; there are annuals, biennials and perennials, of which the baobab is known to live 5,000 years. Many insects live in the imago stage only a few hours. The ephemerids rise from their grublike stage in the water, fly about long enough to mate and die at once. They do not even eat, having no digestive apparatus.

On the other hand, there are locusts that live seventeen years from the day they are hatched. Eels live sixty years; pike, two hundred; turtles live more than two hundred; small birds live seven or eight years; eagles more than one hundred; whales live several centuries; horses from fifteen to thirty years; elephants from thirty to forty, though it is popularly supposed that they live to one hundred years.

But when we get far down in the scale of life we find creatures that never die—yes, and some that are difficult to kill. The rotifers, for example, many of the bacteria, and some small nematodes can be actually desiccated and stored away in a dry place for a long time and then revived by moisture. Creatures that are unicellular are immortal—that is, of course, if some hungry thing does not come along and make a dinner of them. More marvellous still, we are assured by such authorities as Prof. Jacques Loeb and Dr. Alexis Carrel that every single cell of our own bodies is, or can be, immortal. Dr. Carrel has fragments of the heart of an embryo chicken, cut out eight years ago, which are still alive and growing. Leo Loeb has proved the immortality of cancer cells.

And certain organs have been removed from men already dead, kept on ice for days, implanted or grafted into the bodies of other men, and lived. The glands of reproduction have been transplanted from the bodies of dead young men into those of living old men, and not only survived but rejuvenated their hosts.

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The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. Here are the latest numbers:

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25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline C. Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by Beulah Poynter.
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector J. Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
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36 "Trailed by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieutenant Robert W. Warden.
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39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
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New Hair Growth After BALDNESS

On legal affidavit, John Hart Brittain, business man, certified to this: "My head at the top and back was absolutely bald. The scalp was shiny. An expert said that he thought the hair roots were extinct, and there was no hope of my ever having a new hair growth.

"Yet now, at an age over 66, I have a luxuriant growth of soft, strong, lustrous hair! No trace of baldness. The pictures shown here are from my photographs." Mr. Brittain certified further:

After hair growth

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Photo when bald.

"At a time when I had become discouraged at trying various hair lotions, tonics, specialists' treatments, etc., I came across, in my travels, a Cherokee Indian 'medicine man' who had an elixir that he asseverated would grow my hair. Although I had but little faith, I gave it a trial. To my amazement a light fuzz soon appeared. It developed, day by day, into a healthy growth, and ere long my hair was as prolific as in my youthful days.

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Obviously, the hair roots had not been dead, but were dormant in the scalp, awaiting the fertilizing potency of the mysterious pomade.

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MONT BLANC LOSES TOP.

The top of Mont Blanc fell off November 26 and started an enormous avalanche, which rolled down into Italy along the gorge of the Brenva Glacier, destroying in its course the whole forest of Pourtud.

The origin of the avalanche was unknown till yesterday, when the weather cleared, and a powerful telescope could be brought to bear on the mountain. Then it was found that part of the limestone pyramid which forms the summit of the greatest mountain mass in Europe had split and fallen.

The avalanche was one of the biggest and most destructive known for some time. The rock and ice tumbling from the summit dislodged immense snow fields, which in turn tore out rock, and the great mass went rumbling down the mountainside for nearly ten miles. It plunged along the glacier bed, leaped the valley of the Doire, throwing pine trees and boulders about like corks in a waterfall, and came to rest almost miraculously at the entrance to the little Italian village of Pourtud. Several houses, which stood almost in its path, were spared by a width of only a few yards, and so far no less of life has been reported.

BOYS SETTLE DISPUTE; SCHOOL-MA'AM REFEREE

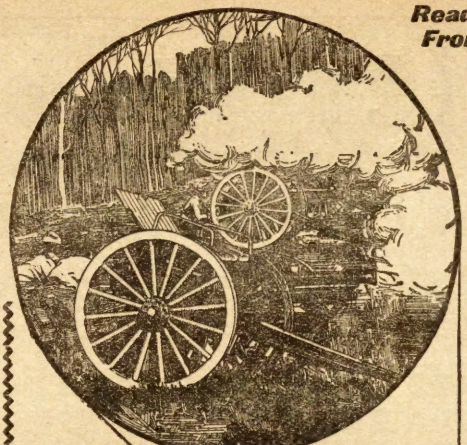
Schoolroom disputes among the boys at the Webster School in Chicago, where children of twenty-two nationalities attend classes, are not settled by arbitrary fiat of a teacher. Instead, the principal of the school, Miss Alice M. Hogge, believes in letting the boys decide their grievances with their fists, it was learned recently, and in the latest quarrel she acted as referee and second to both combatants.

It was a fight to the finish in school basement between Salvatore Sortino and Abe Selon, both aged 12. Time was called several times to enable the combatants to rest and rinse out their mouths, and after fifteen minutes Salvatore had an unquestioned decision.

"Letting the boys fight out their troubles is the best way in a school such as the Webster," said Miss Hogge. "Of course, the fights must be fair.

"I never permit any serious injuries. A black eye or two, such as Abe got, is usually the limit.

J. C. Mortensen, superintendent of schools, declared he was in favor of Miss Hogge's method, saying it is the most successful ever tried in that school.



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I have been very slow in sending you an answer. I received my Moving Picture Machine a few weeks ago and I think it is a dandy, and it shows the pictures clear just as you said it would. I am very proud of it. I thank you very much for it and I am glad to have it. I gave an entertainment two days after I got it. Leopold Lamontagne, 54 Summer Ave., Central Falls, R. I.

Sold His for $10.00 and Ordered Another

Some time ago I got one of your Machines and I am very much pleased with it. After working it for about a month I sold it for $10.00 to a friend of mine. He has it and entertains his family nightly. I have now decided to get another one of your machines. Michael Ehereth, Mandan, N. Dak.

Would Not Give Away for $25.00

My Moving Picture Machine is a good one and I would not give it away for $25.00. It's the best machine I ever had and I wish everybody could have one. Addie Bresky, Jeanesville, Pa. Box 34.

Better Than a $12.00 Machine

I am slow about turning in my thanks to you, but my Moving Picture Machine is all right. I have had it a long time and it has not been broken yet. I have seen a $12.00 Machine but would not swap mine for it. Robert Lineberry, care of Revolution Store, Greenboro, N. C.

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1 lb. sugar	.15	.03
1 can sardines (in olive oil)	.30	.15
1 pkg. Sa-Van (equal to about 3 doz. fresh eggs in baking and cooking	.40	.24
1 lb. baking powder	.50	.38
Face and hand lotion (for chapped hands)	.50	.20
1 pkg. French Face Powder	.75	.46
1 tube Dental Tooth Paste	.40	.23
1 Vanilla Extract (concentrated)	.45	.29
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